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DRAMATIZED SERMONS

ROBERT C. HALLOCK, PH.D., D.D.

DRAMATIZED SERMONS

The New Homiletic

BY

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TRANSYLVANIA BIBLE SCHOOL
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927 FREEPORT ROAD
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FOREWORD

The dramatic instinct is as old as humanity: the use of dramatic forms is as ancient as history.

Adaptation of the drama method of prophesying and preaching is as old as the Church of God: the utilization of that method in the Christian pulpit is very modern.

This present volume is probably the first book of Drama Sermons ever published: may it be the progenitor and inspirer of a long line of truly great drama sermon volumes from others.

It is the privilege and duty of an explorer to map and chart the unfamiliar territory he has traversed; therefore permit the author, as one of its explorers, to describe briefly the lately discovered land he has traveled, the New Homiletic as he has found it:—

A method wonderfully inspiring for the preacher!

A method equally interesting to the people!

An effective method of Gospeling!

A method that lends to biographical sermons a new attraction; to historical sermons a new fascination; to inspirational sermons a new potency; to evangelistic sermons a new penetration; to doctrinal sermons a new vitality. And all this for the universal reason that action is ever more interesting than abstractions.

Hence this drama sermon method makes Bible stories to be remembered through seeing them acted

out; Bible history to be vivid through the revealing vision of imagination; Bible heroes to live by exhibiting them in living scenes; Bible doctrines to be interesting when incarnated in actual life.

This new land the author has partly explored waits for brave adventurers, occasional excursionists, permanent occupiers; and it offers to all these the riches of an inexhaustible fertility.

The author extends to the Editor and Publishers of *The Expositor,* Cleveland, Ohio, thanks for permission to use here material printed in that magazine whether under his own name or the pen name, "Crawford Farnsworth."

ROBERT C. HALLOCK.

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I

PREACHING THROUGH DRAMATIC IMPERSONATION

The New Homiletic

DRAMATIZED SERMONS

PREACHING THROUGH DRAMATIC IMPERSONATION

The New Homiletic

Religious drama in its various forms is one of the newest and oldest, one of the most modern and most ancient of modes of religious teaching. Which is presumable, in view of the fact that the dramatic instinct appears early in the childhood of individual and of mankind alike, and persists through all the years of both. Children's play and "the play" for adults hold childhood and old age in thrall.

The Greek word drama means "action"; that by which man instinctively seeks to supply the inadequacies of human speech, and to express his deepest emotions. Hence it is, that the little people instinctively "act it out" in their sports; and theatrical acting, appearing in the very dawn of civilization, still grips the interest of most mature and cultured generations. Therefore, that in all ages the same instinct should manifest itself powerfully in the realm of religion is by no means to be wondered at, nor its validity to be questioned. For this inborn dramatic instinct is God-given; and if worthily disciplined it is a fit instrument

for spiritual instruction and impression—especially impression.

Indeed our great book of Religion, the Bible, is shot through and through with dramatic elements, and itself makes much use of drama in certain forms.

The Bible poets were dramatists. Poetry and drama attract each other; and as the great dramas of secular literature are poetry, so the great poems of the Bible are essentially dramas. The noble poem "Job" (by many scholars counted the oldest book in the world) may well be classified as strictly drama. It has dramatis personæ; plot and counter-plot; scenes, laid first in heaven, then on earth; tragedy, character testing, heroic endurance, set forth in monologue, dialogue, action and magnificent description; and at last a grand finale, in which the unseen world takes part, poetic justice is disclosed, the hero who has suffered and stood the test is splendidly rewarded.

The prophets were peerless dramatists. Isaiah manifests a marvelous dramatic instinct and method (George Adam Smith, Isaiah, Vol. II, p. 48, seq.). And Jeremiah makes frequent and impressive use of drama as he "acts it out" in proclaiming God's word and will. Micaiah, the son of Imlah, is truly a dramatist, as he pictures the scene in the Court of Heaven when the lying spirit is sent forth to entice Ahab that he may go up and fall at Ramoth Gilead. Indeed if "acting it out" in solemn and elevated guise be the basic element of high drama, then surely the Bible prophets were habitual dramatists in their rebuking, warning, teaching, inspiring.

Nor can we forget that the whole ceremonial system

of Jewish worship was permeated with the element of drama. Take as example the sending out into the wilderness of the scapegoat; drama pure and simple. A great ethical and spiritual lesson was acted out before the people when the priest, having ceremonially laid the guilt of his people upon the one goat for sacrificial death, deputed the second goat, called Azazel, to bear the accursed load of sin far away into the uninhabited, "waste, howling wilderness" where neither man nor God would ever see it more.

Coming now to the New Testament we shall find drama present even more strikingly, especially in the teaching methods of the Master himself.

A deep-seeing poet writes,

> "For men and angels can conceive
> Through symbols only the eternal truths";

and it was through dramatic symbol that Jesus ever mediated to men his divine truth. "Without a parable spake he not unto them." The parable of the prodigal son, for instance, is a drama that might well be put on the boards to-day. But the most remarkable of the Master's uses of drama, with profoundest reverence let it be said, is found in the very holy of holies of his teaching and of our religion, the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper; for here is "acted out" in simplest yet sublimest form the deep things of God. "This bread is my body." "This cup is my blood." "As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup ye do show"—show in dramatic action and significance—"the Lord's death;" and likewise in wonderful symbol the soul's

appropriation of the spiritual benefits of that death. And none the less the sacrament of Baptism is in the truest sense a divine drama, in which is "acted out" before the eyes of the universe, angels and men, in vast and sacred "show-play" (*theatron*), the washing away of human sin and the restoration of the soul to pristine purity.

The New Testament comes to its close with a writing which, though not technically a drama in form, is in the sublimest sense drama in both conception and content, in both purpose and plan. The Apocalypse is one of the sublimest dramas of the world.

Surely it can be seen, therefore, that religious drama is one of the most sacred and most ancient forms (if not indeed the very oldest, in Job) of spiritual instruction and impression.

After this, our course of study leads down the years to the Medieval Church and the Miracle Plays which acted so large a part in the religious instruction of the masses in the Middle Ages, when popular education was unborn, when an evangelistic pulpit was unknown, and when but for the religious drama the common people would have remained in dense ignorance of the Gospel. For near five centuries the Bible in Drama was acted out upon stages, erected first in the churches where the clerics were the actors and afterward upon wheeled stages that were moved from street to street in the cities and towns, where all might see. And there in cycles for a whole day, or three days, or nine days, actors from the many tradesmen's guilds impersonating Bible characters unrolled before the people the thrilling Epic of Redemption, beginning with the

creation and fall of man, and ending with Doomsday and eternal destinies.

And though it be tragically true that with the passing years this solemn religious drama deteriorated, absorbing into itself all sorts of coarse and clownish elements, taking on grotesque and even immoral forms, so that the stern-faced protagonists of the Reformation were fain to destroy it wholly, root and branch, yet no thoughtful student can or cares to deny that the Biblical Drama of the Middle Ages was divinely appointed, a spiritual blessing for the people in its time; a light however dim shining in a dark place.

It is fitting to remark, also, in closing this historical review, that down all the centuries of Christian Church history, not to speak again of seers and prophets of old, the most eloquent and consecrated preachers of the Gospel—from Chrysostom of the Golden Mouth, Peter the Hermit, Bernard and Savonarola, to Bossuet, Massillon, Whitefield, Beecher and Talmage—have consciously or unconsciously used much of the drama appeal, and have preached God's word under intensely dramatic forms.

In the present time we are seeing another notable outcropping of religious drama. Churches all over the land and of every denomination are introducing it into their parish work. In Sunday schools and young people's societies, for missionary instruction and inspiration, and as an aid in worthy celebration of special days, such dramas are used widely and with much acceptance. The Federal council of the Churches of Christ in America has recognized the important significance of this whole dramatic movement by appoint-

ing an active Committee on Religious Drama; which Committee has registered and helped on the accomplishments of the past year by publishing in a handsome volume, entitled "Religious Dramas 1924," the ten best modern religious dramas selected from hundreds. Also various publishing houses are issuing books of religious pageants and other dramatic vehicles of visual instruction; leading homiletical magazines are specializing in religious drama; and non-theatrical makers are putting out many reels of Biblical drama films for Church movies.

Now comes the "Drama Sermon," probably the very latest, as it is one of the most promising and inspiring, means of utilizing the innate dramatic instinct of humanity in "putting across" the old Gospel message to modern men. Following the example of prophets and seers of old, inspired by the ideals and informed by the spirit of the Master, and seeking to prove himself a worthy "scribe instructed unto the kingdom of heaven" by bringing out of his spiritual bursary "things new" as well as "things old," the present day preacher has found a new homiletic method, in which he preaches through dramatic impersonation.

In this method the speaker sets forth each Bible character and episode, with spiritual lessons, in living and vivid form, not by mere description and abstract statements, but by "acting out" before the hearers whatsoever story is studied, whether the Rich Man's debate with his Soul, or the vast tragedy of the Judgment.

The method itself is akin to that of Locke Richardson in his famous Shaksperean interpretations in

which he, alone and unaided by special costumes or scenery, was accustomed to present King Lear, Macbeth, Hamlet, or other great drama, reciting the most significant scenes "in character," and summarizing the connecting portions of the play in terse, illuminating statements of his own.

Handled in this way the whole tragic drama of Judas Iscariot can be set before a congregation thrillingly in a half hour, and with tremendous effect.

The story of the apostle Paul can be portrayed in a course of four or five drama sermons, in such way as to produce upon the mind and imagination of the audience an ineffaceable impression of that gigantic man and his heroic life and martyr death, such as no customary and conventional discourses could ever accomplish.

So likewise there are many similar dramatic presentations to be made, such as the story of Moses the man of God; the tragedy of Saul, Israel's giant king; David, Singer, Sinner, and Saint; Elijah the Hero Prophet; Daniel at the Court of Babylon; John the Baptist; the Seer of Patmos and his visions.

Or this drama sermon method can be used for a noble series of post-Biblical Characters in Church history, such as Savonarola; Wyclif, the Morning Star of the Reformation; Tyndale, the martyr of the English Bible; Martin Luther, the Hero Reformer; John Knox, the Scottish Luther. Indeed the material is measureless, the opportunities unlimited, the possibilities superb, for this new homiletic method of preaching through dramatic impersonation.

Certainly it would be folly to exalt this new homiletic

above the old and tried; "acting out" the message can never supplant the titanic method of Paul, Luther, Lyman Beecher, and Charles Haddon Spurgeon. None the less "there are diversities of operations"; even Paul didn't confine himself to one method, however splendid, and the drama sermon method has some special advantages for the occasional use of the modern preacher.

First, it seems to set new life a-tingle in the preacher who assays it; and this (amongst other reasons) because of the appeal and demand which it makes upon his imagination.

It may fairly be said that the average preacher overworks his logical, underworks his imaginative, faculties: yet as an ingredient of eloquence and for the accomplishment of the objective of public speech the imagination is much the more important in the pulpit. Moreover, not infrequently preachers who imagine they are imaginative do not really use their imagination any more than some people who think they are thinking do really think. One brother frequently tries to paint pictures in his sermon, saying over and over, "I see such and such things happening; I see this man doing thus and so," when he is only using a trick of statement, not imagination at all. Yet the poor people, hungry for the dramatic, listen eagerly for him to tell them something he says he sees.

But really to live with Paul, or John, or Jesus Christ, live his life experiences, think his thoughts, enter into his emotions, realize inwardly his ideals, aspirations, sufferings, sorrows, and make them one's own, and then act all that out to the people so that they may

realize it in their own souls too—that is imagination. And that sets the preacher a-tingle with new life.

The next thing it does, then, is to open a new entrance to the perception and attention of the people. The Psalmist said (Ps. 40: 6, literal), "Ears hast thou digged (or bored) for me:" and any worthy method of preaching that opens a new pair of ears in the head of the hearer is a glorious discovery. Attention is the *sine qua non* for oratorical effect, and in public speech the dramatic is chief captor of attention. "First, action; second, action; third, action;" is the classic definition of the three essentials of eloquence, in which "action" does not mean physical motion, but rather the dramatic—for "drama" in Greek means "action."

Moreover, it will not be amiss to mention the attraction which drama sermons seem to have for outsiders. "Drama Sermons Fill the Pews" was a late heading in a leading homiletic magazine; and if this method of preaching can help answer the question, "O Empty Seat, How Can You Be Filled?" it will prove a blessing to Church, preacher and public alike.

It remains to say that the essential conditions of true success in dramatized preaching are precisely the same as in older methods; and of these conditions two may be specially named,—first, hard work; and second, spiritual sincerity.

The first essential for any worthy preaching is hard, harder, hardest work! Let no man imagine that because drama preaching is novel and unique as a method, it will free him from the necessity of "toil of heart and knees and hands." Drama sermons are no easy substitute for intense thinking, painstaking

composition, prayerful soul preparation, and self-consecration to strenuous effort.

Yet the hardest labor is futile if there be not a great, deep spiritual sincerity. Drama-preaching must be deeply reverent, earnestly spiritual, entirely Biblical, as must any other form of preaching be. If there be the sincere and whole-hearted purpose to glorify God, exalt Jesus Christ, commend the Gospel and save souls, then religious drama and drama sermons can be made mighty forces for advancing the kingdom. But if this drama method be adopted from lower motives, such as to show the preacher as a brilliant actor, or arouse mere curiosity, create a sensation, present a taking novelty, then drama-preaching will go the way of every spurious imitation of the Gospel.

Possibly there are some churches where the people might object to drama sermons as having a secular flavor and lacking spirituality. But if the preacher's purpose and motive be absolutely consecrated, his whole bearing and conduct of the service be deeply spiritual, this hesitancy on the part of the Church will quickly vanish.

So if the preacher have highest ideals of preaching, give all there is of him to preaching the noblest drama sermons he can imagine, then this inspiring method will not only seem to him to be a great new discovery as a homiletic, but will prove a great spiritual joy.

II

CHRISTMAS EVE AT THE OLD MANSE

A Drama Sermon Story

NOTATION

While this book is for general readers no less than for preachers, doubtless ministers who seek to explore the new land of preaching by dramatic impersonation will find convenience in having suggested to them hymns and Scripture suitable for each sermon given. Hence such will be noted.

Possibly also occasional hints from the author's own experience will help in earlier experimentation, which is apology, if such be needed, for the few personal intrusions.

A word as to the way of presentation:

There was no stage setting, costuming or other devices. The only change in the pulpit was that the desk was set back and the lights of the main body of the church were turned off, leaving the pulpit platform alone lighted up. The preacher, wearing his accustomed pulpit gown or robe, and never dreaming that he was there on any other mission than to "commend the Gospel of Christ," threw himself with all the histrionic power he possessed into the very personality of Paul, that he might portray that mighty man and his message to men. And while the Paul sermons were the first, the experience has been duplicated with every drama sermon preached since then.

(HYMNS:

"Soldiers of the Cross, arise."

"More love to thee, O Christ."

"Go, labor on: spend and be spent."

SCRIPTURE LESSON:

I Corinthians 9:7-23, revised.

RESPONSIVE READING:

Matthew 25:31-46.)

CHRISTMAS EVE AT THE OLD MANSE

A Drama Sermon Story

Episode I: "The Laborer Is Worthy of His Hire"

Incident 1. "'Tis the Night before Christmas"

(*Nightfall. The old manse at Belview. Rev. Luke Graham, of intellectual and apostolic seeming, returns from pastoral work. Mother Graham meets and greets him with her pet name:*)

"Daddy Luke, 'tis the night before Christmas, and all through the house I've been hunting; and truly I find just nothing—save bread, boiled potatoes, cold gravy, and a little tea. . . . Old Mother Hubbard went to the cupboard to find her poor . . . well, her poor Husb . . . something for his Christmas dinner. But when she got there . . . the . . . the . . . cupboard . . . was . . . bare . . . and so . . . and so . . . !"

"What, what, Girlie! Not crying? (She had been his "girlie" for fifty years!) Are these tears? What for, Child? Don't cry, dear girlie!"

"O Daddy Luke, to-morrow is Christmas, and it just breaks my heart that I have nothing nice for your Christmas dinner. I have never treated you that way on Christmas, never once before." (Sobs dejectedly.)

"Now please don't cry. We can heat up the pota-

toes and gravy, toast the bread, and with the tea we can have a famous Christmas dinner."

Incident 2. The Deacons Visit Daddy Luke

(*A gentle knock. The pastor admits Deacon Bushnell and Deacon Hart, bringing a small basket.*)

"Pastor Luke (his people call him Pastor Luke to his face, but Daddy Luke behind his back), from our own scanty store we bring a wee bit to piece out your Christmas dinner—just apples, doughnuts, one triangle of mince pie, and a cup of sugar for your tea. Would that the gift were much, much bigger."

"Oh, I am so glad! (cries Mother Graham). The Christmas dinner for Daddy Luke was truly somewhat scanty; but now we shall fare finely."

"Well . . . ah . . . we deeply regret . . . the truth is . . . (stammers Deacon Bushnell desperately) we hoped to lighten the blow a little . . . ! We two are come on a bitter errand. The official Board has appointed us to tell you that it is no longer possible to raise Daddy Luke's salary, and we have been forced to vote that the pastorate terminate one week from tonight, December 31st. . . . Would God it were not so . . . but what could we do?"

(*Mother Graham's face is buried in her arms upon the table, her shoulders shaking with sobs. Her husband bows his head and says solemnly:*)

"The will of the Lord be done."

(*The deacons quietly rise and go sadly out.*)

"Husband, my heart hath told me all the day that some dark trouble was near. Listen to me now! For

nigh unto fifty years thou hast preached the Gospel faithfully and well; why shouldest thou now be in sore poverty and want? (When feelings are deeply stirred Mother Graham always falls back to her *thee* and *thou.*) Surely the good Book says the laborer is worthy of his hire: a faithful laborer thou, with the hire so small often unpaid . . . and now, it ceases forever! O Daddy Luke, hath God utterly forsaken?"

"Nay, wife of mine, shall we lose faith in him because his ways are dark? Not thus did Job. 'Though he slay me yet will I trust in him.' The Lord will not forsake. Shall we not with the Master pray, 'Thy will, not mine'?"

"Forgive me, husband; thou art right, I know. We will trust him still!"

Episode II: "The Thoughts of Youth are Long, Long Thoughts"

Incident I. Choosing Life's Work

(*Five o'clock Christmas eve. Train for Belview. Gordon Keith returning from Westmoreland College, John Barron from Genevan Theological Seminary:*)

"Well, Gordon, what are you pointing to, now that your college course is near to end? Maybe you'll come to old Genevan, preparing to preach the Gospel. How do you think on that?"

"No, John; the ministry is not for me."

"But, Gordon man, why not? You are a Christian; you are getting a college education; you have ability, and sure I am that you would make a fine and fruitful

minister. Why not think the matter over seriously?"

"I have thought it over very seriously, and negatived it for good."

"Are you willing to tell me why?"

"Yes, I think I am. . . . John, do you know what is to happen up at the old manse to-night?"

"Have you heard of that too? Mother wrote me of it as a thing just suspected. Yes, I do know; and it makes me sick at heart. What will Pastor Luke and Mother Graham do?"

"I'm sure I cannot tell. But I do know this, that I am not willing to face such a fate myself, nor at all to ask some fine girl to share that fate with me."

"Oh, but Gordon, you are far too able; you would climb high."

"John Barron, Pastor Luke is one of the ablest men I know. No man in my college Faculty has a finer mind! and as for preaching—why, for years Daddy Luke has been giving this little church masterly sermons, which surpass those of any one of the city preachers I have heard these four years past. Yet here in little Belview he has been, and here he is! 'The race is not to the swift,' the wise man says."

"How can you explain it, Keith? It doesn't seem fair or right."

"I can't explain; only whatever the explanation be, I'm not going to risk the same tragedy for me and mine—though I hope I am neither quitter nor sneak. But see here, Barron; I imagine I have business talent: why can't I serve the Lord in business? And if I win success why can't I do as much for him with money as I could by preaching? Who knows,

old fellow, but that some day when you are a poor abandoned preacher like Daddy Luke, you may find it mighty handy to call upon your rich friend, Gordon Keith, for a grub-stake in your need?"

"Maybe I shall; who knows? But tell me this, Keith; what will all these little churches do if every able fellow sidesteps the ministry?"

"John, I have wondered and puzzzled over that a lot. Yet it doesn't seem the right thing for live young men just deliberately to jump into this yawning chasm in the forum as that Roman fellow did; especially if we must pull wife and children with us into that ugly hole. It no doubt seemed fine and heroic of the Roman chap, but certainly it isn't sensible to-day."

"No, I'm not asking that of you. Still, what can the churches do?"

"Look here, Barron, why can't our big, rich Church manage things somehow, as our big rich Nation does with its army officers? Couldn't the Church have some such retiring system as the army has?"

"Well, maybe . . . it does look reasonable. Yet none the less, I feel sure that we young fellows simply must not let these old churches die for lack of ministers . . . Say, Gordon, isn't it just as cruel, and as wicked too, to starve a good old church to death as it is to starve to death a good old minister?"

Incident 2. Choosing Life's Mate

(*Ten o'clock Christmas eve. John Barron's home. The mother seated by the table reads her Bible. A step at the door, and John comes in, haggard and sad.*)

"John, my boy, what is it? You look so sad: can it be that Myra has said, No?"

"Yes, Mother mine; the dear girl said, No. And, Mamma, she said that No because I am to be a Gospel minister."

"Why, John dear, how can that be? Myra's a good Christian girl; you have long been devoted to her, and she seemed fond of you; and all the time she has known you hoped to be a preacher!"

"Yes, Mamma, and to-night she let me see that her heart would have dictated a different answer. But the cruel news as to Daddy Luke had brought her to a firm decision to say No to me, if ever I should speak. Nor do I blame her, Mother; she is wise, I see. Yet, oh! the hardest part of all for me is this, that I could win her still, I'm sure, were I to turn from being a minister!"

"Oh, John, John, could you think of that? Could you turn your back upon the Master's ministry, even to win Myra Weston for your wife? Oh, my boy, my boy! . . ."

"No, Mother, I have put that thought behind me once for all. I am Christ's. I must keep nothing back from him, however precious the jewel seem. I surrender all."

(*Mrs. Barron draws John to his knees by her side, and as he buries his face in her lap she murmurs low into his ear:*)

"He that loveth father or mother, son or daughter, or even dearest wife more than Jesus is not worthy of Him. Thy bleeding sacrifice this night is precious in the sight of God, my dearest son!"

Episode III: "The Children of this World are Wiser"

Incident 1. How it Seems to Labor

(*Eight o'clock Christmas eve. House of Tom Graustark, a local labor leader, born in Belview long before "The Works" were opened. Back room, dimly lighted; Graustark and an Irish workman called Joe.*)

"Well then, Joe, the men favor the strike?"

"Iv'ry galoot av thim!"

"Then see that all keep mum, but be ready. When the whistle blows at ten o'clock that morning everything stops dead. The owners will be crazy. But I'll stand up to them for you men: 'After this last day of December, $7 for seven hours' work, and double time for extras, or not a wheel turns in your old Works till the buildings rot down!' They'll have to come to our terms, Joe."

"Thin, Tom, for why cudden't we demand $8 jist as well? They'd have to coom to thot the same."

"You spalpeen, Joe, haven't you any conscience? Want $8 for work any lazy dago without a spark o' learnin' in his nut can do the day he lands! Say, Joe, let me tell you of a man I know in this old town. He's got more brains in his one head than all you men, and he's a crackerjack in his line: yet his bosses have never paid him a nickel above two-twenty-five a day. And now to-night I hear he's fired right off the bat, and with no chance at another job. How would that suit you?"

"Fur the luv o' Moike, Graustark! And whot line is he in?"

"Well, it happens he's a preacher."

"A praicher, is it? Och, the tarnation idjiots, to let the ould bunch ride over them loik thot! Why don't the blasted fool praichers organize? Tell the jintleman, Tom, to jine a union, an' thin he c'n git his rights."

Incident 2. How it Seems to Capital

(*The same evening. The Directors of "The Works" in hurry council, news of the threatened strike having "leaked" to them. The President of the Board speaking:*)

"Gentlemen of the Board, this secret report seems authentic. It comes through my most trusted medium. The scheme for this strike has been hatched suddenly, but it is most skillfully planned and timed. They know of our big new contract, and guess it to be a profitable one for us—one which we should be loath to forfeit or fail on. Moreover they know that the conditions of the labor market make it practically impossible for us to import adequate help just at the beginning of the year.

"What is the opinion of the Board as to what is best to be done?"

"Mr. Chairman, I for one would see the Works stand idle and rot down rather than to surrender to such a highway hold-up as this is!"

"But, Mr. Chairman, permit me also a word. Think what a long-fought strike now, at the beginning of winter, would mean in suffering to the wives and children of all these misguided men. This Tom Graustark

isn't such a bad lot himself, but he's under the control of the State Union, and they are determined to show the Union's power. Graustark leads the men—a set of senseless wooden-heads. The men might go hang for all me; but I hate to think of how their women-folks and children will suffer."

"Well, Gentlemen, just one helpful suggestion comes to me. Ten years ago when a strike was on in January, this old preacher here in Belview, Luke Graham I think his name is, went quietly of his own accord amongst the men and persuaded them, for the sake of their suffering wives and children to drop the strike. It was worth thousands and thousands of dollars to the owners. Perhaps the old Dominie could head off this strike for us. How would it do to interview him?"

"Mr. President, I venture the guess that the aforementioned 'old preacher' did not himself profit to the extent of one of those same dollars?"

"Certainly not, sir! What had the preacher to do with profits? He was simply discharging the duties of his profession."

"Well, sirs, Mr. President and Gentlemen, I haven't spoken before; but I happen to have known 'Daddy Luke,' as his people affectionately call him, quite a good while, and I assure you that while he would work night and day—yes, and give his own last penny, too—whereby to relieve suffering women and children of the strikers, he doesn't keep his loving services on sale to protect the profits of the owners: and most certainly, not in the hope of profits to himself! Daddy Luke isn't that kind of a bird. He would probably tell

you point blank that the Christian Ministry isn't to be used as Capital's cat's-paw as against Labor. If you have no better plan than this to suggest I imagine we might as well adjourn, go home, and take our medicine."

Episode IV: "Called of God to Make Money"

Incident 1. After Twenty Years

(*A score of years have passed. Gordon Keith, now a prominent financier in the great City, and likewise a metropolitan Church leader, revisits his boyhood home. Fred Bushnell, son of old Deacon Bushnell long since dead, is strolling with him past the church and manse.*)

"Tell me, Fred, who is living in the Old Manse now?"

"Nobody. We have had no settled pastor since good old Daddy Luke had to leave . . . and died of a broken heart not long after."

"Yes, I heard of his death, and surmised its cause. A King Lear tragedy in common life! But what is the condition of the dear old church, without a pastor? Have you had no preaching?"

"Irregularly. Some summers a student from the Theological Seminary is sent to practice on us for a couple of months. Once in a while an unemployed minister comes and conducts a Sunday service. But the church members are few and scattered, they have lost heart, and it seems hardly worth while to try to keep the old church up. There are a good many people hereabouts, too, all told; but the whole place is slowly

sinking into practical irreligion, almost heathenism. What is to be done I don't know. If we only could have a pastor once more like dear old Daddy Luke! But that is out of the question. . . ."

"Yes, because there never was another Daddy Luke!"

"Say, Gordon Keith, you and I were boys together; they tell me that you are a rich and influential man in the City, and a Christian leader in one of the strongest churches there. Why can't you work out some plan for the saving of this your boyhood church? They say you are a big financier, able to handle immense undertakings amongst 'Captains of Industry,' as they are called: why couldn't you big men, those of you who still love the Lord Christ, originate and handle some man-sized scheme, some big project that would solve this terrible problem of ministers 'fired' for the want of a few hundred dollars, as was Daddy Luke—and of churches starving for a Gospel ministry, as is our dear old Belview church. Who knoweth but thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

"Fred, I cannot answer that now. My mind is whirling with thoughts and visions! Time, quiet thought and, above all, prayer are needed. Perhaps God may guide into something worthy of his Church. . . . Good night, old friend. Come and see me when in the City."

Incident 2. Captains of Industry in Council

(Gordon Keith's palatial home on the Heights. Seven "big men," splendid fellows all, are gathered at

private banquet. Keith talks of his late trip up-state to his boyhood home. His voice grows deeper as he recounts memories of Daddy Luke, tells over the story of that broken pastorate and broken heart; and then describes that other tragedy, their dying little church.)

"And now, fellows, I'm going to show you my inmost heart. More than twenty-five years ago my conscience called me to become a minister and preach God's word; but Daddy Luke's bitter experience held me back. Yet all these years I have had an ache in my heart that it has not been mine to preach Christ's Gospel from the sacred desk.

"For my youthful recusancy I want to make partial atonement now. Christian friends, I have become deeply impressed that the outstanding folly and economic crime of our American Protestant Church is parsimoniousness towards her men of God who preach the Word. There are a hundred thousand of them in our land bearing up the pillars of safe civilization, of Christian communal character, and of noble national life, who yet are cramped and weakened by economic strain—utterly underpaid while doing heroic work, and facing heart-breaking, hopeless penury when working days are past. I want to help remedy this wrong."

"But, Brother Keith, who knows the remedy?"

"Well, men, I believe the first objective to be an adequate retiring pension for every Daddy Luke; which will not only care for Daddy Luke himself, but (if you see the meaning of my parable) will encourage young Luke to follow in the work, and so supply the shepherd for Daddy Luke's old church.

"Such pension should be not less than a thousand dollars per annum. I have had my actuary draw up a schedule showing the sum necessary to establish such a Pension System in our Church. Twenty million dollars as a cash foundation, plus annual offerings for this sacred Cause, will meet the case."

"And twenty millions can be picked up anywhere, I judge?"

"Well, old friends, my own personal wealth totals almost exactly ten million dollars: one half of this, five millions, I dedicate at once. And knowing from frequent testings the temper of your steel, I have called you to conference as to ways of raising fifteen millions more. Men, you and I together have floated for responsible interests many big hundred-million loans: can we not now float a 'Loan unto the Lord' for a modest fifteen millions?"

"Now, Comrades, may I say a word? Gordon Keith declares that he has a heart-ache in his breast because he once refused to preach the Gospel from the sacred desk. My own conviction is that Gordon Keith was clearly called of God to make money; and that a counting house desk has been his 'sacred desk' from which these many years he has sounded forth the Gospel of his Lord!

"But what Gordon Keith wants of us to-night is not taffy, but specie; not speeches but spondulics. Wherefore I propose that we six men underwrite two and one-half millions each, as a guarantee; then, since safeguarding the ministry is the concern and duty of the whole Church, and especially of the men, I propose that we proceed to establish a Voluntary Laymen's

Committee to organize and carry out a systematic, business-like, Church-wide campaign of education —propaganda, if you choose—amongst all the men of our denomination; daring and inspiring them to meet this magnificent challenge of one man, by raising right off the bat these fifteen millions! This will put the Pension System into actual operation as a soon assured success."

(This motion was heartily and unanimously voted: and as is the way with really "big men," the vote was speedily followed by vigorous, effective effort, resulting in due time in a magnificent success. An account of this whirlwind campaign would make a thrillingly interesting story: but the bare statement of victory must suffice, while we hasten to the finale.)

Episode V: Christmas Eve Once More at the Old Manse

Incident 1. "'Tis the Night Before Christmas"

(*Ten years more have flown. Gordon Keith, now a leisurely gentleman of sixty, has come for another visit to Belview. This time he is to be entertained at the Old Manse itself, and by his friend of Auld Lang Syne—JOHN BARRON!*)

"Well, well, Gordon Keith, glad and happy am I to have you in my home, and after all these years! My eyes that were growing dim are made young again by the sight of your face. Welcome and thrice welcome, old friend. Come in, come in!"

"John Barron, what a rush of memories fills my

heart as I clasp your hand beneath the sacred roof-tree of this Manse! Memories of Daddy Luke, of Mother Graham, of the days of old when you and I found Jesus, and together pledged to him our troth. And now to think that you, my old John Barron, are walking in the holy steps of Daddy Luke, feeding the Lord's flock in the dear Belview church! And this is Christmas Eve at the Old Manse—oh, John!"

"Yes, Gordon Keith, his ways are wonderful indeed! . . .

"But come now into the old study you remember so well and meet my wife and my young preacher sons. For God hath given me that blessing not vouchsafed to Daddy Luke—two sons to preach the same old Gospel after me."

Incident 2. "At Eventide it shall be Light"

"Friend Gordon, my wife . . . you two have known each other in the olden days."

"What! Myra . . . Myra Weston? Can it be possible? . . . Why, I thought that . . ."

"Yes, Gordon Keith, I laugh, for I know what you thought. And I don't blame you. But women change their minds sometimes, my boy! And to my eternal happiness Myra did change hers—yet even so, it took her several years to make the change, I'll say!"

"Not until she had come to realize (said Myra softly) that it is better to trust God and a woman heart than to heed the dictates of any wisdom of the world."

"Well, Gordon, after long service on home mission fields we were called back five years ago to this our

childhood church; five years of joyous work. Now sixty-five years old am I, and entitled to the Fund. Yet may I go on preaching five years more, and meanwhile five thousand dollars will accumulate to my credit in the Fund, expressly to buy for us a cottage home . . . where with the annual thousand dollar pension we can live, happy and independent, while God still gives us life. Our skies to-day are bright; the years to come, serene."

"I am so glad for you, my boy; and for the church."

"Friend, doubt not that we are full aware, how under God we owe all this to you! And many, many others know the same; for in every preachers' meeting where I go I hear scores of happy brethren call down blessings on the head of Gordon Keith, whose splendid munificence and leadership founded the Fund and brought it to success."

"Not unto us, but unto God give all the praise."

"Nay, friend, our Holy Book doth say, *'Honor to Whom Honor Is Due!'*

"The Fund is truly from our God; yet the Church lessens not His boundless praise in honoring that man of God, KEITH OF BELVIEW, through whom it came!"

(*Amen*)

III

THE PANTHEON

A Dream of a Great Council of Gods

NOTATION

A sublime theme, and one beyond the best powers of any man. If it be allowable to say that this sermon grew out of the work of a score of years, then forthwith comes the thrilled but inevitable subjoinder that this same theme calls for the labor of more years for a worthy sermon to grow up unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of a perfect sermonic production in Christ.

> "Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,
> Or what's a heaven for?"

(The following are just a few of the great hymns that may be used:

HYMNS:

"Crown Him with many crowns."
"The head that once was crowned with thorns."
"All hail the power of Jesus' Name!"

SCRIPTURES:

Psalm 89: 1-15; Hebrews 1.

RESPONSIVE READING:

Psalm 2.

TEXT OF SERMON:

Exodus 15: 11.)

THE PANTHEON

A Dream of a Great Council of Gods

Episode I: "Gods Many and Lords Many"

It was near midnight of October 31st. I was at Rome, and on this Vigil of All Saints was in the Pantheon, that temple reared of old to all the heathen gods, but thirteen centuries ago converted into a Christian fane consecrated unto all the saints.

Wearied by the long vigil I had ensconced myself in an obscure corner to observe, and ere I was aware I slept. When I came back to consciousness all the people were gone; yet I was not alone, for a wondrous sight greeted my startled eyes. A dim, unearthly light gloomed rather than illumed that vast circular dome; a multitude of spectral presences filled the rotunda of the temple, and I caught glimpses of ghostly forms and strange shapes of ancient deities, priests and prophets of many a foreign and fantastic cult.

In the midst of all there towered "a throne of royal state which far outshone the wealth of Ormus or of Ind," the seat whereof was empty; and above I read the legend,

"FOR THE GOD WORTHIEST TO REIGN."

Then a herald who seemed half spirit and half man came forth, and sounding his trumpet loud made proclamation:

"Hearken, all ye gods and prophets of the gods: Too long the world hath been claimed by competing gods and taught religions not to be reconciled. Wherefore all deities and all religions are gathered here, agreed to choose in council one deity supreme who shall forthwith be seated upon the throne in this Pantheon, this temple unto all the gods. When so chosen that god shall rule alone; all other deities consent to withdraw from earth into the Abyss, and one religion only shall be taught unto the sons of men.

"Unto this have ye all agreed, and forthwith the supreme choice must now be made. Each deity shall for himself now speak, proceeding on the order of antiquity.

"Let the deities or their prophets now be heard."

Incident 1. The Claims of Polytheism

(*First steps forth into the midst a veiled and hooded priest of most ancient days, and lifts up his voice:*)

"I am Polytheism: that is my name of old. I deserve and demand exclusive right to the worship of mankind for that I saved humanity from blank and brutal atheism, which would have made of man part demon and part beast. But for me, nature would have been a blind and bestial thing without significance or soul. But I filled all the earth and sky with deity. Teaching man to see a god in each bright power of nature I made nature to him divine. The sun became to him far-darting Apollo, flinging from his golden chariot rays of light and life; the great god Poseidon seemed to sweep over stormy seas, and lash for man

destroying waves to calm; sunshine and the silvery moon, waving grainfields and dark woodland paths, all became dwelling-places of great gods—gods which ought to be feared, and could be pleased by man.

"Thus I filled human life with the glory of the divine, and saved humanity from debasing atheism. The Pantheon throne is mine by right."

Incident 2. Arguing for Pantheism

(*Comes now a mystic priest from far-off India who swiftly speaks:*)

"Nay, but hold! Far, far is Polytheism below Pantheism in exalting truth. To see a god in each bright force of nature is thinking as a silly child; but mature and mighty is the mind which comprehends the All in God, and God in the All of things. Out from the Infinite Fountain of the Divine come all things and souls; back into those soundless deeps do all things and all souls sink again. As waves upon the surface of the boundless sea, so are worlds, and nations, and the sons of men upon the bosom of the great All-God, the infinite ocean of Being. How grand, then, the hope of the human soul, to be taken back at last into the depths of Deity, a shoreless ocean that hushes forever its sadness and its wailing!

"All is God and God is All; earth and skies, mountains, oceans, and shimmering stars; ghostly denizens of the Deep, and no less all human souls; these and whatsoever else there be, all are members of God whose mighty spirit is the Cosmos soul.

"No greater thought is possible than this. Panthe-

ism is the oldest and proudest of man's philosophies, grandest religion of the earth. For this supreme and satisfying religion I claim this Pantheon throne and universal adherence of the sons of men!"

Incident 3. The God That Dwells in Fire

(*When the priest of Pantheism ends there follows a murmur of applause, but lifting hand for silence steps forth a poet-prophet from Iran and gently speaks:*)

"Zoroaster is my name; the pure and perfect religion of the Parsees I represent. Hear me, I beseech you all.

" 'Tis true that Polytheism and Pantheism have proclaimed Nature as dwelling place of divinity: but how they both have failed to apprehend the moral majesty of human life! Man, not nature, is the main interest of religion. What explanation have these two purblind priests to offer of moral evil, sin and suffering? How explain that mighty conflict waged eternally 'twixt good and evil, Light and Dark?

"I, even I alone, have taught man the moral meanings of his life; I alone have revealed to him the great god Ormuzd, god of perfect purity dwelling in realms of eternal Light, and upon earth manifesting himself in the pure fire and in all that purifies and brings light. Likewise, I only have discovered unto man that dread god of darkness, filth and wickedness, puissant Ahriman, who dwelleth in eternal Dark, and on earth manifesteth himself in all that is filthy, foul and black. Yea, I alone have made man to know the meaning of the mighty strife these two gods wage, and likewise

man's own duty to take part with Light in that eternal war with Foulness and with Night. Therefore as I alone have touched man's soul, his moral life, I claim for my religion and for the glorious fire god of my ancient land, the throne in this sacred Pantheon."

Incident 4. The Address of Gautama Buddha

(*In the midst of the multitudes there now appears a fourth claimant for the theocratic throne, and his face seems set in an unbroken calm of mystic contemplation, his voice sounds as from the depths of undisturbed repose:*)

"Ye gods and prophets of gods, let us neither seek nor strive, for perfect peace befits the spirit of the wise, whether human or divine. Yet since it is that we do choose this night one religion for mankind and one only deity, behold me as claimant for the throne. My name is Gautama. I am the great Buddha, worshiped even now by countless millions in older eastern lands; yet for the welfare of the western tribes I would that they also through me might know the pathway unto peace.

"The Parsee speaketh of moral evil and its blight; but I alone can conquer evil here and forefend evil from the future world. Evil is rooted in desire; therefore to conquer self with each of self's desires, this is to conquer evil, root and branch. And as for future years, they also are freed from evil when one flings away the selfish will to live. Then cometh Nirvana; eternal emptiness, all desire, all feeling, all emotion gone, this is the pathway unto peace divine.

"Thus give I to men surcease from evil here; and for eternity the utter quiet of an empty sky. For this great boon should the worship of the suffering sons of men be mine; for this, mine the throne erected for the worthiest god of all."

Incident 5. The Sage of the Celestial Empire Speaks

"Hearken unto me, ye dreamers all. To me your teachings seem rose-colored mists that float across the morning skies. But must not real religion be practical, a solid thing?

"Confucius speaks, a teacher of real truth, not misty dreams. I am the first to bring religion down to earth and fix its feet upon the solid ground. My religion is most practical, adapted to life and human nature as they are. I teach men to obey the laws, revere the past, conserve the good long ages have attained, and yield fit worship unto fathers, grandsires, and forebears of old. Thus doth obedience make stable human life; likewise doth virtue make it fair and fine. For this do I claim the honorable eminence. Your throne is rightly mine!"

Incident 6. The Fierce Prophet of the Sword

(*Scarce has the Celestial philosopher ceased to speak when rushes forth with imperious air a stern old sheik from parched Arabia. He is clad in prophet's mantle, and in either hand he bears a crescent and a scimitar.*)

"Hold! Hold! Your throne is mine! There is no

God but God, and Mahomet is his prophet. These other empty heads have prated of many gods that are no gods at all, but I have brought to millions that follow me the mighty message of one only God! Then with the sword's power have I armed eternal truth, and sent truth forth to conquer by the right of might. The sword smites fierce and fast; our war cry is all terror to truth's enemies; the Prophet's word inspires his hosts to far-flung conquest over all the earth.

"Here is a religion that can win! Here is a religion that rewards! Here is a religion that can mass its forces in resistless might! For this mighty monotheism armed with power do I demand this throne; and if ye yield it not, I, Mahomet, will take it for myself by force!"

Episode II: Rex Spiritus Appears

Incident 1. "By Their Fruits Ye Shall Know Them"

(*At the Arabian's threat confusion and a cry break out; all arise and strive for mastery. But suddenly an imperial Figure appears amongst them, Rex Spiritus, who orders peace, and speaks:*)

"Cease this unseemly conflict! Nor god nor man can rule the spirit realm by strife. Hearken now to calm word of reason. Each of these six hath made claims without support of proof. My sentence therefore is that each must produce proof of his exclusive claim, by showing here fair samples of his religious fruit in human life. Let each bring credentials in the

guise of human lives redeemed, of souls satisfied and blest. So shall we be able to decide which god indeed is worthiest to reign."

Incident 2. Ashamed of Their Own Offspring

Polytheism: "Nay, indeed! I am not willing for such tawdry test. 'Tis most unfair and base."

Pantheism: "Not so, not so; Rex Spiritus, not so! The demand thou makest is not in reason, for religions must be tested in themselves, not by the frailties of their followers."

Parsee: "Unfair, unjust! Pure is the Fire, though smoke obscure its light; our god is Fire, his worshipers all too often are grimy smoke that doth obscure the flame."

Buddha: "Not from my inscrutable peacefulness and calm will I step down, to find for these a human sample of them that worship me. Ask me not."

Confucius: "A most unreasonable requirement dost thou make, Rex Spiritus. A master may teach true learning to his school, yet cannot guarantee that all his learners wear clean coats. My doctrine is my witness—not my school. No disciple therefore will I here display."

Mahomet: "Sole prophet of the only God, Mahomet will not submit to plead his case as suppliant, nor bring credentials to support his claim. Mohammedans are not, for Mahomet, argument; but he, their Prophet, is full argument for them. I scorn to meet this impious demand!"

Episode III: Rex Spiritus Sums Up the Evidence

Incident 1. The Voice of the Conclave

"The requirement of Rex Spiritus is just! Bring forth your credentials, prove your claims, ye gods that seek our votes! If ye do fear to show the fruitage of your worship then your religions must be cause for shame. Never will we choose as Deity supreme nor enthrone in this temple of All Gods one whose worship doth not exalt and bless mankind. Bring forth your evidence!"

Incident 2. Rex Spiritus Reviews

"Hearken all, to me: since these deities do refuse a test that's just, we ourselves will review the case for each.

"For Polytheism, I do summon the splendor that was Greece. Look on these noble buildings, these marble images, these human forms trained unto freedom, strength and grace. Are they not all beautiful? Were we seeking evidence of Art, surely Polytheism should be enthroned on the evidence of Greece. But religion is different and deeper far than Art. Nay, Polytheism, thy religion lay as blight, not blessing, on the spiritual life of Greece and by the impure morals of that land thou art condemned. Not thine, not thine the throne!

"Pantheism, were it in high philosophy that we were reveling, thy mystic speculations would fascinate in-

deed; but religion must purify and bless the common life of men. What of this hast thou to show? Behold the curse of caste: no brotherhood therein! See child-marriage and the widow's woe: not love but death is there! Consider amongst thy millions, how they pray to slimy serpents, beasts, demons, and the dead: a blight is this upon the human soul. If God be All and All be God, then filth and foulness, death, disease, and crime, each one is part of deity to be adored of man. Pantheism, thou hast no worthy message for immortal souls: no throne have we for thee!

"And now thou prophet of the Fire and Light, hath thy worshiped Fire yet purified thine ancient land from dross? Hath Light enlightened thy cities and thy plains? Nobler thy dream than is thy power to do, and by the test of fruitage hast thou failed; nor canst thou show religion's seal of souls redeemed and blest.

"Withdraw thy claim upon this golden throne.

"Gautama Buddha, ten hundred millions of the sons of men have sought in thy religion food for souls: what hast thou given them? For salvation they have come to thee: What hast thou offered sin-sick souls?

"Nothing but Nothingness! Death is the only salvation thou dost preach, annihilation the only heaven thou dost promise them. The utter quiet of an empty sky, all life and hope and meaning gone . . . that is not peace, but blank despair, not heaven but hell. The haggard eyes and hopeless faces of thy myriads who find no satisfaction for soul-longing in thine Eternal Emptiness condemn the prophet that offers stone for bread. This throne is not for thee!

"Thy claim, Confucius, we have heard and weighed. For social order and for honesty thy practical philosophy hath borne much fruit; but truly with religion it hath least to do. Though religion must inspire right social order, honesty and toil, yet these alone are not religion's self. Thy religion hath no soul, nor saveth souls; neither doth the spiritual estate of hopeless millions thou hast taught and trained evidence thee as Worthiest to Reign! For another one than thee this throne doth wait.

"Come hither, Mahomet, thou scornful blood-stained bearer of the cruel sword, and hear the judgment of this council on thy claims.

"Thou art no god at all, nor prophet of any true and living God. Thy pathway streams with blood, cruelty the banner of thy march. Blatant now thy claims, more blatant still thy threats, but until mankind shall choose hell as their god, and hate as their religion, never canst thou sit upon this throne. All gods and seeing men reject thy claims. Go thou, seek the Abyss!

"And now, alas, all these claimants rejected, all their claims disproved, the throne stands empty still! Is there not any god worthy to reign over all the tribes of men?"

Episode IV: "Among the Gods, None Like Him"

Incident 1. The Nazarene Appears.

(*Suddenly as Rex Spiritus ceases there stands in the midst of the vast temple and the thronging con-*

clave a radiant Presence unseen before. My startled eyes seek his face and in a moment I know him for that majestic Man, the matchless Nazarene. The garments he wears are red, for he hath trodden the wine-press alone. He is crowned as king, but with a crown of thorns. Marks of nails show in his hands and sandaled feet, and through the parted robe I catch glimpses of a wounded side. Gently he speaks, but with vibrant tones that seem to thrill the very heart:)

"Yea, thou Kingly Spirit of the human soul, there truly is a God worthy to take this throne that ye have reared, and reign over all the sons of men: yet more, he is worthy to take yon glorious throne builded above the skies and reign over all the infinite universe above, below, within.

"And he hath not won that right by cruel sword, nor heaped his pathway with the conquered dead. Nay, he himself hath died: death is his title to the throne of power, for by dying hath he won true life for man. Men shall be blest in him, nations shall bless him forevermore.

"Now shall ye see credentials of his right to reign.

"Behold I make to pass before your sight all shackles, broken from the wrists of slaves; all doors, torn from cruel dungeons where prisoners have wailed; all broken hearts, healed by balm divine; all mourners, comforted with oil of joy; all heavy laden, finding sweetest rest; all tortured consciences, at peace at length; all enslaved womanhood, lifted to royalty; all little children who have wept, made to smile in sunshine beauty, laugh with childhood's joy. For love, and peace, and brotherhood, and purity, and righteous-

ness spread the whole earth around when men do worship him.

"He and he alone is Worthiest to Reign!"

Incident 2. The Shadows Flee Before the Sun

Mahomet: "Back, back to the Abyss from whence we came, let us flee from this fierce, blinding Light!"

Zoroaster: "Not so, but let us recognize him as rightful Lord, and all worship him."

Episode V: "Crown Him Lord of All"

Incident 1. Rex Spiritus Proclaims Him King

"Hearken unto me, ye priests and prophets of all gods of earth who have competed for the worship of mankind!

"I am the Royal Spirit of the soul man; for humankind I speak, and in the name of the Universal soul of man I do proclaim JESUS OF NAZARETH man's only Lord and King! Among the gods there is none like him, king of kings and lord of lords. . . .

"I crown thee, Peerless Jesus, Lord and God; I pledge thee all my love; I swear to follow thee for evermore! AMEN."

Incident 2. "The Spirits of Just Men Made Perfect"

(*As Rex Spiritus ceases suddenly the vaulted skies give back reply:*)

"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive the

power and the honor and the glory. Amen. . . . Unto him that hath loved us and hath washed us from our sins in his own blood, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

Incident 3. The Adoration in the Pantheon

(*Then as moved by one impulse and one spirit, the great conclave in the Pantheon stands and sings with voice that reverberates through the mighty vaulted dome:*)

"All hail the power of Jesus' Name!
Let angels prostrate fall;
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And Crown Him Lord of All!"
"Amen."

(*And I awoke; and behold, it was a dream.*)

IV

SAUL, THE PERSECUTOR

Fanatic, Fierce and Splendid

"Paul is the preacher's hero." Who first said this no one knows. Perhaps it was Apollos. But after his Master, the apostle Paul has been studied more, preached about more, marveled at more, and himself has inspired men more, than any other man that ever lived.

Is it claiming too much to say that Dramatic Impersonation is the best method ever discovered through which to portray Paul's personality, interpret his spirit, reveal the secret of his power, and exhibit the grandeur of his heroic character?

Why should it be claiming too much? Isn't it through dramatic impersonation that all greatest Shaksperean interpretation has been accomplished? Hamlet, Lear, Macbeth, Portia, Lady Macbeth, stand out before the minds of men as tremendous personalities mainly through the dramatic interpretation of those characters by mighty actors on the stage; actors who by deep study and musing have entered into the very personality and self-consciousness of the characters to be portrayed, and so have made them to live and speak before the audience. And if the pulpit should produce a preacher able to interpret thus the premier Apostle as adequately as Booth interpreted Hamlet, by this same dramatic impersonation, it would be both a more majestic and a far more valuable accomplishment, even as the real Paul was measurelessly greater than the imaginary Hamlet in thought, in life, in character. And as a sermon, and for spiritual effectiveness, it would doubtless outrank any sermon of the conventional type ever preached upon Paul.

(HYMNS USED:

"Not all the blood of beasts."

"God calling yet! Shall I not hear?"

"Sinners, turn; why will ye die?")

SAUL, THE PERSECUTOR

Fanatic, Fierce and Splendid

Episode I: In Which Saul Communes With Himself and God

(*Saul, a fanatically enthusiastic young Pharisee, a ruler of the Jews, fiercely devoted to the ancestral religion, is seen in his library passionately bemoaning the destruction which the schismatic followers of that hated Nazarene are working in Israel:*)

"O God of my fathers, thou God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob, dost thou not see the mischievous evil that is wrought in Israel by these sons of deceit, the followers of that false prophet of Galilee? Behold how they come even into our sacred temple, the holy and beautiful house which our fathers have builded for thy pure worship alone, and with their lying doctrines they corrupt even true sons of Abraham! Wilt thou still hold thy peace while these iniquities continue in our holy city, Jerusalem?"

(*Saul bows, lost in thought for a time, and then cries:*)

"But perchance it is our own fault! May it be that God waits for one who is faithful to arise and cleanse his inheritance from this foul blot, even as Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest smote the adulterers in the days of the plague, and by his holy zeal turned aside the wrath of God from Israel?

"Wilt thou not, O righteous Jehovah, raise now up for us a deliverer from this religion of lies, even as thou didst raise up Phinehas of old?"

(*Again Saul bows in deep thought. Then suddenly he leaps to his feet, his face convulsed with emotion and excitement, and quiveringly cries out:*)

"I? I? Is it I whom thou wouldest call to do this great and terrible—yet indeed most holy!—service for thee and thy true Israel? Nay, O God, I am but a youth, a little child, and student of books; I am not the needed brave and tried warrior, fit to do bloody battle for the Lord of hosts! How can I, I, lead in this thy holy warfare against thine enemies in Israel? . . .

"And yet . . . and yet . . . O God of my fathers, I am in thy hands, to be used as thou wilt! Call me and I will run after thee. Yea, at thy behest I go forth to thy service, be it what it may."

Episode II: Saul at the Stoning of Stephen

(*A confused rabble of people, priests, church dignitaries; in the midst of them a man called Stephen, whom with furious hate they are hustling out from the city; once outside the gate they form a circle about their victim, and with big stones in their hands they rush madly upon him. Saul is standing there in the front rank, and he is keeping the outer garments of those who first hurl the stones upon Stephen's head. He speaks first to himself; afterward to the victim:*)

"O Jehovah of Israel, this is in truth a piteous sight!

See that terrible stone hurled with savage strength upon the man's unprotected head! Behold how the blood gushes forth! And there . . . another! . . . full into his upturned face! . . .

"Another! . . . and yet another! Must I stand here and view this horror? . . . Yet, O thou God of justice and of truth, pardon, I beseech thee, my unworthy softness of heart, when thy judgments are executed upon the evil. Not thus did the son of Eleazar weep over those adulterers, clean through whose bodies he drove God's avenging javelin! Let not mine eye pity nor my hand spare when God's honor is at stake!

"What sayest thou, O follower of that false prophet? 'Heavens opened.' 'Son of man at God's right hand.' Blasphemy upon blasphemy! Rather, I see hell opening for thee, and the quenchless flames of Gehenna springing up to meet the blasphemer of God's holy sanctuary! . . . Die! . . . die! Enemy of God and of his holy Law! . . . Ah, he is dead . . . as he richly deserved!

"Take your garments, true witnesses. Your task is ended, your reward is sure."

EPISODE III: IN WHICH SAUL AND THE HIGH PRIEST HOLD CONFERENCE

(*A room in the palace of Theophilus, son of Hanan, the high priest. Saul is standing before the seated holy man of God. Saul speaks:*)

"Sacred and reverend priest of the MOST HIGH, my heart flames with holy wrath against those contemners of the Law of Moses and the house of our God, even

those pestilential heretics who are followers of that hated and justly executed impostor called Jesus the Nazarene. I have wept and prayed before the Lord, beseeching him that he would raise up for us a deliverer from this foul thing, even as he raised up Phinehas the avenger in the days of the Midianitish apostasy . . . which took place in the very presence of Moses, the man of God, even as this present one is in thy sight, God's holy priest!

"And hearken unto me, my father: God hath revealed it unto mine own soul that he hath chosen and ordained me, weak and most unworthy as I am, that I should be his instrument to execute his holy wrath upon his enemies. Well do I know that I am most unfit for this great work, yet have I put myself in God's hands to use me as he will. So have I come unto thee, thou holy priest of God, that I may receive at thine hands authority and commission for this sacred service of the Lord.

"I would have papers of authorization from thee, by which I may be empowered to arrest and bring bound unto Jerusalem for trial, condemnation and punishment of death, all whom I may find, whether at distant Damascus or in other strange cities, of those who have forsaken the true religion of Israel for this false heresy of Nazareth. Wilt thou grant my petition?"

"Saul, my beloved son, surely thou art true, and also brave! Thou dost delight my heart by thy zealous devotion to the holy Scriptures and by thy faithful observance of all the sacred rites of our Law. Would that we had many more like unto thee, jealous for the Lord God of Israel, and hating with perfect hatred

all them that rise up against him, as saith the psalmist David!

"Yea, Saul, I would that I were a young man as thou art; for then would I lay hold of sword, shield and buckler and go forth myself against the enemies of the temple, of the Law of Moses, and of us, the teachers of Israel, who are the rightful and exalted rulers of this fickle people! I tell thee, Saul, that every true priest in Jerusalem hated with fierce hatred that accursed Nazarene, who dared to hold us up in mock and scorn before the common people; and we hate all his followers, who would rob us of our immemorial honors and authorities. And do thou hate them too. Take as thine ever-present motto those words of the royal Psalmist, the man after God's own heart, when he said: 'Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? And do not I loathe them that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred! I count them mine enemies!'

"Yea, Saul, count these unbelievers thine own personal enemies; hate them with fury of hatred that will spare neither young nor old, neither man nor woman!

"Here is thy written and sealed commission: go, and God give thee glorious victory!"

Episode IV: On the Road to Damascus

(*Saul in his tent, the night before they are to reach Damascus, is pacing restlessly up and down murmuring to himself:*)

"Father Abraham, what a week of woe this journey has been to me! As I have ridden day after day, and

gloomed in my tent night after night, my soul has been torn asunder within me. I started upon my journey with blazing zeal and confident devotion: but all along the way doubts have beset my path, questionings have sprung up in the road before me like unto vipers that would bite me should I press on. What does it all mean? Could it be possible that God's high priest . . . Nay, I'll not think the thought! Alas for my weak and wavering heart . . . devoted to God and his glory, yet endlessly arguing and pleading with me for those who must suffer because they forsake the true God and go after impostors . . . No, by Jehovah, our King, I swear it, I will not falter in this sacred mission on which the Lord hath sent me! Hear me, thou God of Israel: I am fixed in my purpose! I will root out and pull up this accursed heresy of the Nazarene if I have to fill the dungeons of Jerusalem with prisoners and put hundreds to death . . . as they did with Stephen! . . . Stephen! O merciful God, his name brings back to me all my awful dreams. I can see him now, as I have seen him in my sleep at night a hundred times! Shall I never cease to see him? Can I never get out of my vision that face? . . . a face bathed in blood and the death-damp upon the brow, yet irradiated as it had been the face of an angel gazing right at the Throne of the Omnipotent! And can I never stop hearing that forgiving prayer? Even as he died in anguish he prayed in a voice that seemed to reach the height of the heavens, 'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.' Did God hear?

"O thou Holy One of Israel, might it be possible

that Stephen was right? . . . that in the dread paroxysm of death he really did see, through the parting heavens, Jesus, the crucified, standing, even as he said, close by the throne of God? Oh, oh! were that true I should be proven a servant of Satan, an enemy of God . . . Nay, nay! I'll not believe it! *It Is Not So!*

"God of justice and of wrath, forgive my fickleness of mind. Have I not here commission and authority from God's High Priest to do this sacred work? Did not the great prophet Samuel rebuke with holy wrath Israel's first king, gigantic Saul, whose name I bear, because he spared Agag of the Amalekites? And did not that heroic prophet, the aged Samuel himself, with his own hands hew Agag in pieces before the Lord? Let me beware lest I prove weakly recreant (as did that greater Saul) to my God-given duty of vengeance upon the foes of Jehovah and of his temple! . . .

"I'll seek both couch and slumber, that I may be refreshed and strong for the supreme work which I have to do for God on the morrow in Damascus, which we reach at midday.

"O God of righteous judgments, arm me with thy might, I pray!"

Episode V: "Galilean, Thou Hast Conquered!"

(*Approaching midday. Saul and retinue drawing near unto Damascus, and a magnificent view of that fair "Eye of the East" bursts upon them. Exclamations of wonder and delight spring upon all lips, save*

those of Saul: he is straining forward with set and savage gaze, like a bloodhound closing in upon the prey.

Suddenly there blazes from heaven a light of indescribable brightness, like a white-hot flame. "It seems as though the whole atmosphere has caught fire, and they are wrapped in sheets of blinding splendor." And as thunder follows fast upon lightning, even so a marvelous Voice speaks out of the midst of the bright terrible glow. The whole retinue, both man and beast, fall prone upon the earth; and though the others, when the blinding light and awful Voice are past, struggle to their feet, Saul lies rigid and motionless in the hot sands. His eyes are fast shut, his countenance convulsed with agony, physical or mental. Reuben, one of the party, speaks to another named Dan at his side:)

"All glory unto Jehovah the God of Israel! Dan, my brother, what hath befallen, and what hath happened unto us? Meseemed that the very heavens had fallen, or that yon blazing sun had left the sky and crashed to earth right upon us! Dan, canst thou tell what were the words which that terrible voice uttered when it spake out of the midst of the blinding glory?"

"Nay, Reuben, I know not. The voice, so awful as it was, seemed to search my inmost soul and go through me like a blazing sword: yet could I not rightly distinguish the words which were spoken. But I beseech the God of Israel that never again shall such voice speak to me, lest I die!"

"But look, Dan, look! What aileth our master, Saul? The others have all risen, though they stand

in dumb amaze; yea, the very beasts we rode droop trembling and sore smitten with fear; but Saul rises not. He lies like a dead man; yet his face writhes, his lips are moving, he seemeth to be speaking; but his eyes are closed as though in death!

"Let me draw near and speak to him.

"Saul, my leader and my lord, tell me what aileth thee. Canst thou not rise? Give me thine hand and let me help thee to stand up upon thy feet. Canst thou not open thine eyes and see? . . . O merciful heavens, what do I behold? Thine eyes appear as though they had been seared by white-hot iron . . . yea, as though thy very eyeballs had been burned to a horrid crisp in some sevenfold-heated fiery oven!

"Saul, Saul, tell me what thou didst behold in that fierce, fiery light, that thine eyes are thus flame-smitten as though they had dared to look upon the awful Face of the very Jehovah God?

"What didst thou see? *'Jesus of Nazareth! Jesus Who was Crucified,'* dost thou say, 'appeared unto thee in Divine guise, and his insufferable glory smote thee blind?'

"O thou Holy One of Israel, what shall we do? What can we say? . . . for then indeed it must be true that he whom not many months ago I saw nailed upon that cross of Golgotha; yea, whom I myself (woe is me!) with all that multitude reviled and scorned . . . it must be true that he was even as he claimed, THE VERY SON OF GOD!"

V

"GALILEAN, THOU HAST CONQUERED!"

The Persecutor Converted

NOTATION

This is a theme and story through which to set forth the process and philosophy of true Christian conversion, and the path the truly convicted soul must travel to reach the wicket gate of justified peace. And if Saul's experiences on the Damascan way, and at the house of Judas in the street that is called Straight, be a marvelous medium through which to picture the power of Christ to convict the willful sinner, and the gracious control by which he constrains repentant souls unto himself, surely conversions should be the objective here. Such spiritual dramas as this demonstrate that the drama method is not for entertainment nor for display, but for intensely earnest proclamation of the Gospel of salvation.

As to the last part of the sermon, it might well be said that the attempt to visualize and make real Paul's experiences in Arabia, whither he went after his conversion, would exhaust the pen of a Milton, the pencil of a Doré!

(SCRIPTURE LESSONS:

Acts 9:8-18; Acts 22:10-16; Gal. 1:11-17; 2 Cor. 11:30-12:4.

HYMNS USED:

"Grace, 'tis a charming sound."
"There is a fountain filled with blood."
"Stand, soldier of the Cross."

RESPONSIVE READING:

Psalm 51.)

"GALILEAN, THOU HAST CONQUERED!"

The Persecutor Converted

Episode I: Three Days of Darkness

(*Reuben, having led the sightless Saul into Damascus and found him a lodging at the house of a disciple named Judas in the street that is called Straight, comes the following morning to inquire.*)

"And how doeth my master Saul this morning, friend Judas? Hath he slept? Hath he taken food? Hath he held converse with thee?"

"Nay, friend Reuben, neither food nor drink hath passed his lips; nor do I believe that he hath slept one moment all the night. He remains in solitude, gazing with wide-open but unseeing eyes into empty darkness. He murmurs continually in deep distress. I know not what to do for him."

"But canst thou tell me, Judas, what he saith thus with himself?"

"Truly, Reuben, I have not hearkened."

"Well, Judas, if perchance we may help him, I beseech thee to listen to the words he speaketh."

(*Judas gently pushes the door ajar and bends his head within the chamber. Saul is speaking in low tones of deep bitterness:*)

"Fool, fool that I was! Ought I not to have studied more carefully the Galilean and his many infallible

proofs? And what evil spirit possessed me that I, a ruler of the nation, a man of highest place, and a learned student of great truths, should have so disgraced myself as to have mingled with low fellows of the baser sort and have taken part in deeds of blood? Undone, undone, and accursed am I for my headstrong folly! What a fool—what a fool!"

(*Judas closes the door with deeply troubled look.*)

"What thinkest thou, Judas? What is it that so afflicteth my master that he will neither eat nor drink, neither sleep nor receive any person?"

"Alas, Reuben, I know not what to think. He seemeth most distressed at his earthly humiliation; when indeed his fearful sin in persecuting and slaying disciples of the HOLY ONE ought most to afflict his spirit. I pray God to lead him to see himself as a lost and undone sinner!"

"Truly, Judas, I scarce understand thy words. And yet . . . and yet . . . I myself, since the hour of that terrible vision, have in mine heart a woeful feeling . . . O Judas, I do fear that God hath cast me off for mine iniquity in persecuting the followers of the Nazarene! . . . Judas, Judas, tell me if thou canst: 'What must I do to be saved?' "

"Brother Reuben, by God's grace I can tell thee that! Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved! The blood of Jesus cleanseth away all sin. As Moses of old lifted up that brazen serpent in the wilderness and whosoever looked was healed, even so Jesus Christ was lifted up on the cross, that all who look in faith may be saved."

"O friend Judas, I understand it now! Yea, I do

look unto Jesus crucified. I look upon him whom we pierced; I believe on him as my saviour! Dear friend Judas, the darkness hath now all gone and I joy and rejoice in Jesus. Let me hasten to mine own lodgings that alone I may weep and pray before him!"

(*Early morning of the second day. Reuben comes eagerly to the house, and Judas meets him at the threshold:*)

"Greetings, brother Reuben, loving greetings in Christ. How hast thou fared through the night?"

"O friend Judas, I scarce have slept at all, so full is my soul of joy and blessedness. The Lord hath sweetly and graciously revealed himself to me through all the watches of the night!

"And now I pray thee to tell me how it is with my master Saul this morning?"

"Alas, Reuben, the watcher who sat near his door all the night saith that Saul's woeful voice was heard continually, though his words were not discerned. Shall we again open the door of his chamber very gently, and hearken?"

"Yea, Judas, let us do so, for his help if it may be."

(*Judas again quietly opens the door. Saul is speaking to himself in woeful tones:*)

"Oh, what a sinner I am! . . . the very chief of sinners! Who, who hath ever sinned against God, against light, against love in such ways as I have done? SIN . . . SIN . . . SIN! It clingeth to me like blackest pitch; it drippeth from my very garments like slime of a dunghill; I am foul from head to foot with this awful foulness of sin! O wretched man that I am! Woe, woe, woe is me for my sin, my accursed sin!"

(*Judas gently draws the door shut; with shining eyes he turns toward Reuben:*)

"Praises unto God, brother Reuben, for that thy master Saul shall live!"

"Joyful, joyful, am I, dear Judas, to hear thy words. Is his spirit now in calmness?"

"Nay, not so; he is in much worse distress than yesterday morn."

"Then how canst thou cry praises? Wherein is he at all bettered?"

"Verily, Reuben, a sick man is better in sharp pain than in deathly stupor. Saul is in agony because of his sin, and God thus prepareth him for pardon and peace."

"But, Judas, if it be so, why did I, unworthy as I am, suffer so short a time before God through thy word gave me peace and joy?"

"God alone knoweth, Reuben. Yet may it be that thy sins against light were not so great as Saul's; and moreover it may be that our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ prepareth Saul in the fierce furnace of affliction of soul for some greater work in his kingdom than he hath for thee to do. Who knoweth?"

"Well, Judas, I pray that Saul's anguish of soul be mercifully shortened, lest he die in the tortures thereof. Farewell until the morrow."

(*The third morning at daybreak. Reuben knocks and enters.*)

"Oh, tell me how it goeth with Saul! My heart is breaking with longing for his life and peace."

"Well, Reuben, come thou and hearken into his chamber. All the night have I heard therein the

sound of gentle weeping and crying. List thou to what Saul is saying."

(*Reuben gently opens, stands reverently quiet. Saul is praying:*)

"O God, thou hast sworn that thou hast no pleasure in the death of the sinner. O God, be merciful to me a sinner . . . the chief of sinners! Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight. If thou dost cast me out to eternal death, thy judgment will be just and right. Yet, O God, did not Jesus die even for me? I beseech thee in his name alone, O God, be merciful to me, the greatest sinner of all! Behold I lie before thee bathed in tears of repentance; I wait upon thee, O God, until thou dost have mercy upon me."

(*Reuben closes the door without a sound, and turning to Judas whispers joyously:*)

"Thank God, he shall find that mercy soon!"

Episode II: Ananias Comes from Christ

(*Some one knocks at the outer door. Judas goes and opens.*)

"Peace be unto this house and unto all who dwell here.

"I pray thee tell me, abideth in this place Saul of Tarsus, the persecutor of the followers of the Nazarene?"

"Yea, in truth Saul of Tarsus abideth here, but no longer is he the persecutor! The Nazarene hath conquered the persecutor, who now lieth in yonder room weeping and praying and confessing his sins."

"Thanks be unto our God! And now understand I that vision of an hour ago. In the dimness of the dawn though scarce awakened I saw with mine own eyes the appearance of the Master, Jesus, who spake to me and said, 'Ananias, arise and go into the street that is called Straight and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus: for behold he prayeth.' I pray thee, therefore, lead me to Saul that I may deliver to him the Lord's message."

(*All three go together into Saul's apartment. Saul is kneeling, face buried in his hands upon the couch. Ananias looks on him a moment in pity and love; then goes quickly and lays his hands on Saul's bowed head:*)

"Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, who appeared unto thee in that glorious and terrible vision, hath sent me unto thee. Behold, thine eyes shall now be opened, thou shalt receive thy sight; also the Holy Ghost shall now come upon thee and fill thee with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

(*Even as he speaks, thick scales fall from Saul's eyes; he looks up into the face of Ananias in wondering amaze as though seeing a mighty angel messenger from God.*)

"Saul, my brother, the God of our fathers hath chosen thee unto great experiences and great obedience in Christ. And now why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling upon the name of the Lord. Behold here is water; and I do baptize thee by thy new name, brother Paul, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."

(*Paul cries out:*)

"O God of my fathers, what shall I render unto thee? The sorrows of death compassed me; the pains of hell got hold upon me: but thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from their bitter tears! Blessed be Jesus Christ who hath redeemed me! From henceforth forever I am his bond-slave, his alone to do with me as he will! O God, I do swear it!"

Episode III: Paul Preaching and Persecuted in Damascus

(*The following Lord's Day a group of believers are gathered in the house of Ananias, and they are speaking together of the events of the past week. Ananias addresses them:*)

"Beloved in the Lord, marvelous things hath our God accomplished whereof we are glad! Even when we were in dread for our lives at the coming of the fierce persecutor, the Lord intervened, smote down that persecutor, and then to the glory of the Gospel of Christ converted the ravening lion into a meek and gentle lamb . . . changed into the likeness of the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world!

"Yet now, brethren, hath he again changed that lamb into the similitude and likeness of a lion—the lion of the tribe of Judah! For yesterday in the synagogue I did hear our Paul preach the Lord Jesus in words of such burning eloquence and such compelling power as I had never thought to hear from mortal man. He proved so incontrovertibly, so gloriously, Jesus of Nazareth to be the very Christ of God, the Messiah promised unto Israel from of old, that even

the most learned rabbis sat overwhelmed by the wondrous speech, and dared not utter one word in contravention.

"Such a mighty message the men of Damascus never heard before! And he ended by saying thus: 'Men and brethren, I know and declare unto you that Jesus of Nazareth IS THE VERY SON OF GOD! I know and proclaim unto you that he is in truth ISRAEL'S PROMISED MESSIAH! Yea, and I know that he is our ONLY SAVIOUR—for he hath saved ME, THE CHIEF OF SINNERS! And no one else was there able to save such a sinner!'

"Yet, beloved in the Lord, I do fear that harm be intended to our brother Paul; for the rabbis and leaders of the Jews went out of the synagogue with black and ugly looks, shaking their heads and whispering together what seemed to be angry threats.

"We must all be brave and watchful to protect him as best we may from their malice."

EPISODE IV: "THROUGH A WINDOW IN THE WALL"

(*Judas and Reuben have brought Paul news of a terrible plot against his life; guards are watching every gate of the city to seize him if he attempts to get away. The houses of all the followers of Jesus are shortly to be searched, to apprehend Paul in case he remains in hiding. The disciples have made plans to get Paul out of the city. Reuben, his faithful companion, has gone quietly to a near-by village and is waiting. Judas and three other strong men gather secretly with basket and long, strong rope, into the chamber of a faithful dis-*

ciple whose house is upon the city wall. In the night Paul, muffled in his cloak, goes secretly and alone to that house. Judas speaks:)

"Grace, mercy and peace be unto thee, Brother Paul!

"Our hearts are sore to see thee go from us, but it is the Lord's will. He hath great things in store for thee, that we do surely know; and thy life must not be sacrificed to the malice of these unbelieving Jews in Damascus.

"Look you: we will now hang this large basket just a little way below the window's ledge, making the rope fast to this stone pillar. Do thou climb carefully through the window, and with the help of our hands take thy place upon thy knees in the basket, holding firmly to the rope. So! Now we four will lower thee slowly and quietly down to the ground outside the wall. When thou art safely landed, give the rope a little pull, and we shall know that all is well and draw the basket up again, lest thy way of escape be revealed in the morning.

"And now, Paul, beloved friend and brother, go! And God be with thee, and keep thee safe under the shadow of his wings!"

Episode V: Paul in Arabia

"These be strange and solemn places, dear brother Paul! Behold, afar yonder rises the rocky summit of Sinai, which lifts itself like a mighty altar of sacrifice before the Lord of Hosts. It is worth all our weary journey from Damascus to look upon that sight!"

"Yea, Reuben, we are in a land of wondrous memories and of holy history. We seem to be alone with God and the spirits of our fathers. This way marched the hosts of the redeemed sons of Jacob on their way from Egyptian bondage to the glorious liberty of the sons of God. On yonder mountain top God came down in glory and majesty when Sinai was all wreathed in flame and the trumpet of the Lord Jehovah sounded long and loud; and so terrible was the sight that even Moses said, 'I exceedingly fear and quake!' And up there on that mountain top Moses met with God, and for forty days . . . O Reuben, what an experience that was! My heart surges within my throbbing breast when I think upon that which was revealed to the very eyes of Moses, the man of God . . . Reuben, Reuben . . . could it be, think you . . . could it be that a man in these last days should share with Moses that unmeasured bliss, that unutterable joy, even to see with human sight the very glory of God? O Reuben, I grow sick with longing when I dream upon such a thing as that! To see the glory of God . . . it seemeth to me that I would most gladly lay down my life for that holy joy!"

"Brother Paul, I am not deeply learned as thou art, nor do I fully understand these things. But I pray thee tell me, if thou knowest, for what the Lord hath led thee and me into this barren and lonely land of silence, afar from the dwellings of men! What are we come to do in this wilderness of Sinai?"

"Reuben, beloved brother, I myself scarce know or understand; yet I feel in my soul a deep yearning to be alone . . . alone with him who hath redeemed me

and called me into his service. Reuben, I have felt a strange power within me that seemeth to be like that which drave our Master into the wilderness after his baptism. I do feel that I must go yet deeper into these mountain solitudes, and that I am to meet there with HIM who hath called me hither, that I perchance may learn at his own mouth the deep things of God, and be fitted for the work he hath for me to do!

"Dwell thou here, Reuben, by this bubbling spring, and beneath this overhanging rock which shall be thy roof and thy protection. The Lord hath sent me among yon mountain walls and crags. I know not for how long. But seek me not: when the Lord hath done his holy will with me I will return hither unto thee, and we will go together back even unto Jerusalem. Fare thee well, my brother. Tarry for me here."

EPISODE VI: PAUL ALONE WITH JESUS—AND IN PARADISE

(*After many days during which Reuben employs himself as best he may, one day in the early dawn Reuben descries Paul returning, and runs to meet him. But as he draws nigh to Paul a strange awe checks his flying feet and holds him in a deep amaze.*)

"O holy Paul, what hath come unto thee? Thou mindest me of Moses when he came down from this same mount of God! His face, the Scripture saith, shone so marvelously that he must need put on a veil, that the children of Israel might be able to look upon his countenance. And truly thy face, even thine, shineth as with a glory from God's throne! What hath

happened, Paul my brother? I beseech thee to tell me! . . .

"Dost thou take no note of me? Canst thou not look upon me nor hear me nor speak to me? Thy spirit seemeth to be dwelling apart as in some mountain height of holy visions . . . Paul, Paul . . . Hast thou seen the GLORY OF GOD, for which thy soul was sick with longing? Tell me, O Paul my brother, tell me, I adjure thee!"

"Who . . . ? Where . . . ? What . . . ? Who is it speaketh to me? Is it thou, Reuben? . . . I had forgotten . . . Where are we, Reuben, and what doest thou here? . . . Hast thou also been in Paradise, and seen that which . . . ? Oh! shall I ever, ever forget? Will that vision ever grow dim in my memory? Nay, not though I live on earth a thousand years!

"Reuben! Didst thou ask me what it was . . . what I have seen? I'll tell thee, Reuben, for thy heart is pure . . . The Lord Jesus came to me . . . Nay, he called me up to himself . . . and he talked with me . . . Nay, he showed me . . . he opened my spirit's eyes and caused me to see . . . to see . . . O Reuben, I have not yet fully awaked from the glory of that vision . . . Nor is it possible, Reuben, for me to tell thee what it was! Things of earth are told in earth speech, but words used in this world have no meaning in the . . . in yon Paradise of God. The things of heaven are in another world from human speech . . . Reuben, alas, I can never, never tell it to thee! Eye hath not seen nor ear heard nor heart imagined . . . GOD!

"But come, let us return on the way to Jerusalem—

and to the lost multitudes that know not Jesus—and to that work the Lord hath given me . . . Come, Reuben, let us go . . . let us go quickly! For I see . . . I see the world of dying men . . . I must hasten thither to tell them, yea, to show them CHRIST CRUCIFIED FOR THEM—FOR THEM!

"For Christ's sake must I go: come quickly, Reuben! Come!"

VI

PAUL, THE WORLD-MASTERING MISSIONARY

The Eagle's Flights

NOTATION

This sermon, while not so intense as either of the preceding, calls for more variety in delivery and gives opportunity for still more dramatic "action" than the others. The closing scene, in which the attempt is made to suggest to the ears of the audience the effect of the pandemonium of voices, the uproar and riot of the shouting, shrieking, yelling mob in the theater, is a scene calling for thorough preparation and most skillful delivery. If rendered tamely and quietly it will fall flat; if delivered too noisily and boisterously it will destroy the sermonic effect. Given with seemingly utter abandon, yet with resolute self-control, living through the scene in one's own mind, it can be made powerful.

(HYMNS:

"Fling out the banner! Let it float."
"Soldiers of the Cross, arise."
"Ye Christian heralds, go proclaim."

SCRIPTURES SUITABLE:

Acts 16:19-34.
Acts 17:16-33.
Acts 19:23-41.

RESPONSIVE READING:

Psalm 2.
Psalm 72.
Psalm 9.)

PAUL, THE WORLD-MASTERING MISSIONARY

The Eagle's Flights

Episode I: Deified and Stoned

(*Back from Arabia; at Jerusalem, and persecuted; at Tarsus for seven years of brooding silence; evangelist at Antioch for a glorious year; summoned by name by the Holy Spirit for special missionary work. The young eagle's first flight; persecuted, but ever pressing on: Antioch, Cyprus, Perga, Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, and thence in reverse sequence back to Syrian Antioch. Episode I occurs at Lystra; Paul is preaching; a life-long cripple sits eagerly drinking in the Gospel. Paul suddenly cries out:*)

"Thou helpless cripple sitting there, thou dost believe this message of Jesus the Saviour: I can read it in thy face! Jesus is able to save thee from thy sins; and to give thee sure evidence, he will this moment heal thee of thy life-long infirmity. Look at me! Stand right up upon thy feet!"

(*The man as though electrified springs to his feet, runs hither and thither in ecstasy of joy, and then flings himself down at Paul's feet and bursts into tears.*)

"They are gods! They are gods! These men are gods in human form!" (cry the multitudes in their native speech). "See, yon older and larger man is the

great god Jupiter himself, whom all the Romans worship; he who speaketh so wondrously is the wing-footed Mercury, messenger and spokesman of the gods! Ho, ye officers! Run, call the priests of Jupiter from their temple before the city gates; bid them that they hasten hither with sacred oxen reserved for holy altars, and that they bring likewise garlands of flowers; that they forthwith offer fitting and solemn sacrifices in the presence of these great deities who have honored us with their visit and blessed us with their healing power! Stay not one moment! Speed ye to call the consecrated priests of Jupiter, the greatest god of all!"

(*Paul, not comprehending what is happening, goes on with his sermon. But soon joyous shoutings sound without; chanting of pæans and applause of multitudes are heard in the public square before the place of assembly. Barnabas looks out, then suddenly exclaims:*)

"O Paul, Paul, knowest thou what they are doing? The heathen priests have brought oxen and garlands, and are beginning to offer sacrifices unto thee and me as deities! What, oh, what, shall we do?"

"Stop them! Stop their blasphemy at once! Come, Barnabas, come with me to stop them!"

(*Rending their garments in sign of horror and anguish of spirit Paul and Barnabas rush out. Paul cries:*)

"O men, men, men, don't do this terrible thing! We are not gods, neither are we angels nor spirits, but just common men like yourselves! Offer no sacrifices to us! God alone is to be worshiped—the true and living God; not the gods of the nations, but the ONE GREAT GOD who dwells in heaven. About him, and his

glory, and his goodness we had just come to tell you. Hearken to us, men of Lycaonia! Jupiter is no god at all, neither is Mercury, nor any other of these heathen idols, the work of men's hands! But there is one God, one only; and he it is that hath made all things. His are the heavens above our heads; the sun which ye worship as a deity is only a creature of our one great God. He created the sea, which ye ignorantly worship as inhabited by Neptune, another heathen imagination. Yea, it is our God, the one great God of all things, who hath given us the sunshine and the rain, the flowers and the fruit, and hath supplied all our needs. These blessings all witness to the power and love of our God whom we preach unto you. Worship him, him alone; not poor human beings such as we, nor heathen imaginings which are no gods, whether Jupiter, Mercury, Neptune or Mars. Take away your oxen and your garlands!"

(*Reluctantly the priests of Jupiter gather up their sacrificial flowers and start to lead away their sleek oxen. Just then certain Jews arrive, traveling in haste; and these address the crowds:*)

"What do we see, men of Lycaonia? Hath this imposter, Paul, bewitched you also? Know ye not that he is a smooth-spoken reprobate who hath deceived many with his pretended miracles and lying words? No wonder that he hath deluded and mocked you, good trusting people as you are. But at Antioch we treated these deceivers as they deserved, and drove them out. Then having learned that they had come this way to make victims of you good and true men of Lystra, we journeyed all this weary way in great haste to warn

you, and have arrived just in time. And now, lest these rascals go on to fool other cities, let us end their lying work at once with these convenient stones. We ourselves will lead.

"Rush upon them, men of Lycaonia!"

(*Paul is dashed to the ground. Stones are hurled upon his prostrate form. Suddenly two huge fellows grasp him by either foot, run down the street, out through the open gate, and fling him far into the field, where he lies stunned and bleeding. But as his converts hastily gather about him Paul revives, stands up, goes back into the city, and in the morning he is off to Derbe to preach with all his accustomed fire.*)

Episode II: The Eagle's Second and Most Soaring Flight

(*After a short interval at Antioch, Paul's tireless zeal drives him out upon his second and greatest missionary journey, but with a new companion, Silas, with whom he goes forth for a far-flung Gospel campaign on two continents. After a wide sweep in Asia, Paul is sleeping at Troas beside the Grecian sea.*)

Episode III: Vision of An Appealing Europe

"Paul, thou servant of the most high God, hearken unto me! Behold I am Macedonia; I represent Greece, the great land of song and story, of art and architecture, of eloquence, letters and glory. Yea, I stand here in the name of all Europe, with which the great future of the world is bound up. Listen to my pleading. We

need and must have the message which only thou canst bring. We have the richest things of earth; but we are ignorant of the things of heaven. Our lands know not the true God; they are unsaved by his Son. Come over and help us, O thou Messenger of Life Eternal! Bring thy great Gospel of the Son of God across these narrow seas to our Grecian lands; imbue Europe with the Divine Truth; and all the coming ages of the earth shall be Christ's. Come! Imperial Europe waits for thee—whether Greece, Rome, or great Western Nations yet unborn! Come for our helping, and human history shall be made new!"

Episode IV: Songs in the Night

(*The very next day finds Paul and his helper sailing for Europe. Philippi, a chief city, their first place of witness. In Philippi a demented slave girl is freed from an evil spirit, and persecuting wrath is let loose upon Paul and Silas. Terribly scourged, dungeoned, feet fast in the stocks, they are passing the dark hours in deepest suffering. Paul speaks:*)

"Brother Silas, it is a sore affliction that hath been laid upon thee because thou didst lovingly accompany me on this gospeling journey! My heart bleeds for thee. Dost thou repent thy choice, since it hath brought upon thee all this pain and anguish of body?"

"Nay, brother Paul: I do count it a great honor that I be permitted to suffer pain and ignominy for the name of Jesus Christ. But thou—thou art more frail of body than I: hast thou not suffered beyond thy power to bear? I would that I were free from these

stocks that I might minister unto thy need. But all is dark herein with Egyptian darkness; I can neither see thee nor reach thee to help thee in any wise. What can we do?"

"O Silas, my brother, afflict not thy spirit because of my sufferings—which truly are nothing in compare, when I remember that which my Lord Jesus did suffer for me upon the Cross! But thou dost ask what we shall do to pass the hours of darkness while we are in such evil case. Well, first, let us pray to our blessed Saviour and tell him how we rejoice to be made partakers with him in his sufferings. . . . O LORD JESUS, our hearts' beloved, behold, for thy name's sake we suffer these things; yet are we not ashamed, but rather we do joy and rejoice in these tribulations! O blessed Master, who didst die upon the cross for us, abide thou with us in this dark dungeon and all our pains shall be as nothing, in the glory and joy of thy gracious Presence! Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

"Brother Silas, can we not sing in this midnight darkness some of the songs of Zion? Thou hast a singing voice: lead thou our praise, and I will join with thee as best I can. Sing thou that great hymn of trust which comes to us from of old—

> " 'God is our Refuge and Strength,
> A very present Help in trouble!'

"And that other, a psalm of David the king:

> " 'Out of the depths, O Lord, have I cried unto Thee:
> My soul waiteth for the Lord more, yea more, than
> they that watch longingly for the morning
> light!' "

"Hark, brother Paul, what is that noise I hear? The very walls of the prison seem to be bending and cracking. The great iron doors are clanging as though a mighty earthquake were shaking all the prison. Paul, Paul! My chains are fallen from my hands, the stocks are broken open, I am free!"

Paul cries with a great voice: "Jailer, do thyself no harm! We are all here! No prisoner hath fled, though all the doors stand open! No evil shall come to thee from this great judgment of God: be calm and do thyself no harm."

"Ho, lights there! Bring lights to me, the warden of the jail! Hasten torches, that I may see these prisoners in the inner dungeon!

"Alas, sirs, how woeful am I that I was forced by mine office to lay such sufferings upon you: and in your patient endurance of it all I did read your devotion to the Nazarene whose name you bear. But oh, I know now that I am a sinner, undone and lost; my own angry conscience accuses me, smiting through my breast as with a blazing sword! Oh, sirs, is there any hope for me? What must I do to be saved? I beseech you to tell me!"

"My Brother, there is, yea, there is hope for thee! Nay more, there are full pardon and salvation for thee this moment. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved: and not only thou thyself but also thy wife and thy children, yea, thy whole household, so overflowing and abundant is the mercy of our blessed Jesus!"

Episode V: The Babbler Before the Philosophers

(*From Philippi, Amphipolis, Apollonia, to Thessalonica and Paul's great course of sermons; Berea, and then—Athens.*)

"Ho, Theramenes, thou greater Plato; greetings. What is there new to-day?"

"But little, I fear. Yet, O Aristarchus, hast thou heard aught from this wandering Jew who talketh so bravely upon the corners of the streets? 'Tis said that he professeth to know the beginning, the end, the plan and the purpose of the great Cosmos and all that it contains. He must indeed be a greater philosopher than our Aristotle, if he knoweth all that!"

"Nay, Theramenes, I have not even seen him, but I am told that he is rather a herald of some fantastic religion than any philosopher: he is continually prating of one Chryseos, or Christos the name may be, whom he calls an offspring of the gods, and worthy to be worshiped. No philosopher he! Rather a fool or a fanatic; a retailer of picked-up scraps of learning."

"It may be, Aristarchus; yet must he possess no little dialectical skill, for 'tis reported that he hath put to the worse in verbal combat even our chief Stoic philosopher, Cleanthes."

"Come, come, Theramenes, this Paulus as they name him was neither born nor educated in Athens; he hath not dwelt in Athens, the center of the world's thought and culture; he can be of no weight or worth! He is but a babbler: who careth what the babbler babbleth?"

"True, O Aristarchus, he is no Athenian. Never-

theless, though our Athens be the intellectual center of the world, why may there not flow to her from without some streams of philosophy and of truth, even as the vast ocean is fed by rivers that flow into it from afar? Who knoweth but this stranger may even bring us some treasures of wisdom?"

"Well, Theramenes, by good fortune yonder cometh the little journeyman philosopher himself; and behold Xenocrates, the head of our Epicureans, is even engaged in debate with him as they walk followed by many!"

"Aristarchus, what sayest thou to our summoning this Paulus to speak before the Areopagus and explain this new teaching of his to the best and most learned in Athens? Then we shall soon know whether he be prophet, philosopher, fanatic or fool!"

(*Paul is invited to ascend to the summit of the Hill of Mars and address the assembled philosophers in that ancient place of privilege. He begins his address:*)

"Ye men of Athens, I speak to you on the supreme subject of religion; that which is the highest form of philosophy. And I have rejoiced, while passing along your beautiful ways and observing your glorious buildings of perfect architecture, to see the proof that ye yourselves are a nobly religious people. For are not your most splendid buildings reared to the honor and worship of some deity? And truly such civic recognition of religion is worthy of this great and cultured city, the pride of Greece and the intellectual capitol of the world.

"But, men of Athens, though to many gods ye have reared many and beautiful shrines, I have discovered

that there is one God of whom ye confess yourselves ignorant; yet whom ye declare your desire to adore. For as I was walking your most beautiful road this morning I saw one shrine which bore this inscription:

"'THIS SHRINE IS DEDICATED TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.'

"Now by great good fortune it is just concerning this unknown God, whom though not knowing ye yet worship, that I am able to tell you to-day. For though there are many of your most revered gods of whom I know nothing, this one God unknown to you is the God whom I love and adore! So favor me with your attention, while I tell you of him.

"This God unknown by you is the God who, in the beginning of the æons, created all this world and filled it with beautiful things. He is the God who built the vast and shining sky above us, and filled it by night with multitudes of stars of silvery light, by day with the splendors of the sun. He is the God who maketh the fields fruitful and feedeth both man and beast, giving them life and breath. Moreover, this great God of whom I speak is the God who hath made all the nations of the earth, and hath appointed to each nation its dwelling place: to the Athenians this peerless heritage of glory; to all the Greek peoples their priceless patrimony; and to the peoples of Rome and of other nations many, their habitations. And it was God's purpose that all of these several nations should come to know him as their one great God and Father of all.

"Now, men of Athens, I know well that ye have reared great and beautiful temples wherein your deities

may abide, and where to them ye may offer many costly gifts: but this great Unknown God whom I proclaim to you dwelleth not in temples made with hands, for the whole sky is his temple, and far above it is his dwelling place. Yet is he also with us and around us, for in him we live as in the very air we breathe. Yea, as even one of your own poets hath said, 'His offspring, too, are we.' Well then, if we ourselves—living, thinking and aspiring men—are the offspring of God, most surely he must be like unto us, only far wiser and more wonderful. What folly then for us to think that we can make God out of dead things, such as gold, silver or senseless stone! Is it not so, O Athenians?

"It is true that through the æons men have done this, and God hath not punished them for the insult to his glorious person; because he hath considered that they knew no better: but just in these late days he hath sent his own son into the world in the form of a man, to teach men better things. And now he is charging all men everywhere to turn about and do right, because he is going to bring every man before God's judgment bench, where each will be judged by that son of God, made man!

"But rightly you ask, What proof have we that God will do this solemn and terrible thing? This: that when wicked men had slain God's son, God called him back from the gloomy realms, and on the third day according to his promise raised him from the dead!"

(Some) "Ya! ya! ya! Hear the man! Raised him from the dead! What nonsense. We have had enough of this; let us hence!"

(Others) "We will hear thee further, sir, concerning this matter some other day."

Episode VI: Great is Diana of the Ephesians

(*From Athens to Corinth; 18 months; Ephesus briefly; Jerusalem; Antioch. The eagle's third flight. Galatia and Phrygia. Ephesus for three years. Stay ended by the theater riot. Demetrius the silversmith is speaking:*)

"Silver craftsmen of Ephesus, your main business, as ye know, is making our small silver images which we sell to multitudes of pilgrims who come to worship at the shrine of the great goddess Diana. By this craft we have our wealth. But our work is like to stop and our wealth to vanish, because of the bad influence of this pestiferous Paul who goeth about everywhere turning people away from the worship of our gods. So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at naught; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshipeth.

"Fellow craftsmen of mine, what are we going to do about this? Sit down meekly, let him ruin us and our business, and dishonor our great goddess—or what, tell me, what do you intend? If we are men, we will forthwith do something!"

(They all shout:) "Great is Diana of the Ephesians! Great is Diana of the Ephesians! For her defense let us fly to find this accursed Paul and tear him limb from limb! Great is Diana of the Ephesians!!"

(*They dash out; the city is soon in uproar; unable to find Paul they catch two of his companions, and a huge mob rushes into the theater. For a time they shout aimlessly, mainly cursing Jews because Paul is a Jew. Alexander, a Jew, tries to explain that Jews are not Christians; but this maddens the multitudes still more, and all with one voice about the space of two hours cry out:*)

"Great is Diana of the Ephesians! Great is Diana of the Ephesians!! Great is Diana . . . ! Great . . Diana . . is . . great . . Ephesians! . . Great . . Great . . Dian. . Dian. . . Ephesians! . . Ephesians! Ephesians! . . Great . . Great . . Diana . . Diana . . is . . Ephes . . Great . . Dia . . Eph . . Diangreat-Ephes Dian . . greatephesians . . Great . . Di . . Diana . . Diana . . Great is Diana . . Diana . . GREAT IS DIANA OF THE EPHESIANS! . . GREAT IS DIANA OF THE EPHESIANS!!!"

And so the Gospel is howled out of the city by the maddened greed of self-seeking Special Interests!

VII

PAUL: THE DRAMA'S END

"I Have Fought a Good Fight!"

NOTATION

Preachers are deliberately advised to make two sermons from the material included in this one. The portion of Paul's story covered is so enthralling, the truths to be impressed are so sublime, the possibilities of effect are so great, that it were a pity to sacrifice results to haste. It would be a strong presentation to make one sermon of four Episodes:

I. How the Holy City Welcomes Her Most Heroic Son.
II. The Shipwreck on Malta.
III. Rome! One Typical Day of Paul's Prison Life.
IV. Christ's Hero Before the Hound of Hell.

Then make the closing sermon also of four Episodes:

I. The Uncaged Eagle's Final Flight.
II. Love's Farewells in the Dark Mamertine.
III. "The End Crowns All."
IV. Apollos the Eloquent Sums It Up.

(HYMNS USED:
"Onward, Christian soldiers."
"Stand up, stand up for Jesus."
"Ten thousand times ten thousand."

SCRIPTURES:
Acts 21:27-36; 23:10-13; II Cor. 2:23-31; II Tim. 4:6-8, 16-18.)

PAUL: THE DRAMA'S END

"I Have Fought a Good Fight!"

Episode I: "I Appeal Unto Cæsar"

(*Following events crowd fast. From Ephesus to Macedonia Paul hastens to Corinth; thence on final journey to Jerusalem, pausing at Miletus for that pathetic farewell to the Ephesian Elders; then, ever pressing forward despite many inspired warnings of danger, he arrives at Jerusalem just before the Feast of Pentecost. And now behold how the Holy City welcomes her most heroic son! Standing in the crowded temple he is recognized by pilgrim Jews from Asia, who leap upon him screaming:*)

"Men of Israel, help! Here is that accursed Paul, who hath journeyed everywhere reviling Israel, railing at Moses and the holy Law, deriding our religion and dishonoring our temple; and now hath he even brought profane heathen into this holy house!

"Seize him, true Israel! Let him not escape again: drag him forth from the holy place and tear him in pieces! . . ."

From every side they rush together, crying: "Paul! Paul! Here is that accursed renegade, Paul! Kill him! Kill him! Kick him! Beat him! Drag him out, and tear him in pieces! . . ."

"Ho, Chief Captain of the castle! Those fool Jews

are fighting again! All Jerusalem is in uproar! Soldiers, soldiers; bring soldiers quick! . . ."

"Ah, the knaves! What are they fighting over now? Ho, there! Centurions! Bring bands of soldiers instantly! Follow me down to that shrieking mob yonder in the temple enclosure. Come flying!"

"Here, ye Jews, what meaneth this? Leave off that violence! Cease beating that man! Who is he, and what hath he done?"

"It's Paul!" . . . "renegade!" . . . "hath profaned the temple!" . . . "hath dishonored Moses!" . . . "hath attacked Israel!" . . . "hath scorned our holy Law!" . . . "renegade . . . scoundrel . . . hated traitor . . . he ought to die . . . kill . . . kill . . . KILL him! TEAR HIM in PIECES! . . ."

"These crazy Jews, who can deal with them! Centurions, pick that man up between you and carry him. Soldiers, form a ring about them with swords and spears and press back this howling mob! So. Now, forward to the castle stairs. Fling open the gate; let none of this mob follow up the stairway; take now the prisoner into the castle to be examined!"

"Sir Captain, may I have a word with thee?"

"What, canst thou speak Greek? I took thee for that rebel murderer from Egypt. Well, what wouldest thou?"

"I am a Jew, a citizen of the Cilician Tarsus thou knowest of; I fain would make my defense before mine own people; suffer me, I beseech thee, to address them from this upper stair."

"Speak on: thou hast permission."

"Brothers and fathers, hear my defense! I am a

Jew! I was trained and I was zealous. For my zeal I persecuted these Christians with all my might, until that Jesus Christ himself conquered me, called me, and commanded me that I should go afar and proclaim his name unto the Gentiles, and . . ."

"Kill him! Kill him! He isn't fit to live! He disgraces the earth! Away with him! T-e-a-r him in p-i-e-c-e-s!" Thus the Holy City welcomes her hero home!

(*The following morning. The Sanhedrin has been summoned. Paul is brought before the august court to make his second defense. The prisoner speaks:*)

"Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day . . ."

"Smite him on his lying mouth!"

"God shall smite thee, thou whited wall! Dost thou sit there to judge me under the law? And yet contrary to the law thou commandest me to be smitten! . . ."

"What! Reviling God's high priest?"

"Brethren, I knew not that he was the high priest . . .

"Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee! I was born and reared a Pharisee! The Pharisees believe in the resurrection of the dead: the Sadducees deny! And it is for my faith as a Pharisee that I am attacked . . ."

"Hearken, brother Pharisees, this man is a good man! He is innocent of any wrong-doing! What if some spirit or angel hath spoken to him? Never yield a faithful Pharisee to these unbelieving Sadducees!"

"Ho, ho, ye Pharisees, we will kill him in spite of

you! Drag him from their hands! Kill him! kill him! TEAR HIM IN PIECES!" And so as wild dogs fight over their quarry, thus these holy Pharisees and cultured Sadducees fight over Paul!

(*The prisoner rescued again, the balked Jews plot assassination; Paul is sent to Felix the governor, and once more makes his defense; then again before the new governor, Festus; then before King Agrippa and his royal train: and each defense is a masterpiece. But despairing of justice Paul finally cries, "I appeal unto Cæsar:" and the official response is made, "Hast thou appealed unto Cæsar? Unto Cæsar shalt thou go." And that Cæsar was . . .* NERO!)

Episode II: Christ's Hero Before Satan's Hell-Hound

(*There follow the departure for Italy, the thrilling shipwreck, the storm-stayed winter; Rome at last; then two whole years as a trusty in hired lodgings, yet always chained to the Roman guard—two years of marvelous spiritual activities and fruitage, though in prison. And then at last, face to face with that hound of hell, that worst, blackest, foulest, fiercest fiend in human form, Nero. Nero, that depraved degenerate, concocted of "mud and blood," whose horrid and nameless crimes, from the murder of his own mother and his own wife to the fiery martyring of countless Christians, fill up the whole black catalogue of inconceivable iniquities and satanic sins; Nero, whose name is the very synonym of vice, and himself the very shame of humankind!*

Christ's Hero and Satan's Nero are face to face!
Yet for that hero's sake, Christ holds that hound in leash!)

"Thou dog of a Christian Jew, what sayest thou for thyself? Be brief."

"Your Imperial Majesty, a Jew I am by blood; a Christian I am through grace; but by birth I am a Roman citizen—a Roman citizen now seeking justice at the hands of my lawful Emperor, Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus Nero."

"Well spoken, Jew. And if thou be a Roman citizen, I'll hear thine appeal. Speak on and state thy case."

"Your Majesty, full four years have I been a prisoner, at proconsular Cæsarea and at imperial Rome; and mine only crime is that the Jews do hate me for being a follower of our true Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified."

"Who is this Jesus of Nazareth, Jew? And what hath he done for thee, that thou shouldest be his follower?"

"Who is he? He is the great God and our Saviour! He is God manifest in the flesh; he is God over all, blessed forevermore . . ."

"What nonsense is this thou speakest, Jew? God? What god is he? Perchance mythical Mars or imaginary Apollo, or forsooth that fabled deity, great Jupiter himself? Art thou mad enough to believe in such as these?"

"Nay, Imperial Majesty, he is none of these, and no false god at all. He is the one true and eternal God, who made the skies, the seas, and the solid earth; who

reigneth on high and is lord of all, both men and angels; who is the awful King of every land and nation, and is terrible unto the kings of the earth."

"Silence, Jew! I am minded to have thy head smitten from thee where thou standest. Know thou that I am Imperial Cæsar, and there is no king anywhere but ME; neither is there any being in the heavens nor on earth that dares resist my puissant, yea, mine omnipotent will!"

"Alas, Imperial Majesty, many ages ago there was a king over great Babylon, that mighty Rome of old, whose name was Nebuchadnezzar; and that king lifted up his heart in pride and defied the heavens. But the same hour the eternal God of heaven spake the fell word, and proud Nebuchadnezzzar became a raving maniac and rushed forth to the deserts to dwell with the wild beasts—until that he had learned and confessed that the Most High GOD ruleth in the kingdom of men, and that those who walk in pride he is able to abase. Earth's mightiest Emperor is never so mighty as the Infinite GOD!

"Your Imperial Majesty, that holy and terrible God is not a man, but the eternal Jehovah; he is the dread Avenger of all sin; in that dire day which cometh every man, the highest as the lowest, must stand before the awful judgment seat of God and give account! This is the God whom I worship; and Jesus of Nazareth, whom I follow, is his only Son!"

"Well, Jew, I know not why Imperial Cæsar should thus hearken unto thee; but declare thou what this Jesus of Nazareth, of whom thou speakest such mad

words, hath done for thee that thou shouldest be his follower."

"Your Imperial Majesty, though I had hated and persecuted Jesus he loved me and laid down his life for me. But I continued to hate him and to persecute his followers. One day, as I was going on such errand of hate, and was drawing nigh to Damascus, at midday, O mine Emperor, suddenly there shined round about me and them that journeyed with me a dazzling light, tenfold brighter than the sun; under the terror of that heavenly vision we all fell to the earth, and I heard a voice speaking unto me, 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? I am Jesus whom thou presecutest. But arise and go into Damascus and there it shall be told thee what thou must do.'

"Blinded as I was by that fierce light, they led me by the hand into Damascus. Three days remained I in darkness, and did neither eat nor drink; but much I wept for my sins and much I prayed to God. After three days a messenger from Jesus came to me, mine eyes were opened, I was baptized, all my sins were washed away, and I was commanded to go forth everywhere and preach Jesus as the Lord and Saviour of all who will believe. Wherefore, O mine Emperor, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision, but preached Jesus as the Saviour, first in Damascus, then at Jerusalem, and then throughout Jewry. After I had so done, Jesus by his Holy Spirit sent me forth to preach these words of everlasting life through faith in Jesus to all the nations in thy great Empire. It was for this that the Jews, who had hated and crucified Jesus, perse-

cuted and sought to slay me, though I had done no evil: and to escape their malice and obtain justice did I appeal unto thee, O Imperial Nero."

"And thou shalt have it! Hearken, Jew: whether thou art a madman I am not sure; but sure I am that thou art no vile and wicked criminal. Thou art acquitted; go thou free. Behold, I, Nero the Emperor, so ordain. Get thee hence—but see my face no more!"

Episode III: The Uncaged Eagle's Final Flight

(*That same night "Paul the Aged" makes plans for a fourth far-flung missionary journey. In vain Luke the beloved physician beseeches him to curb his soaring ambition in prudent care for his failing health and strength; Paul's spirit drives him to undertake even bigger things. And so the great Eagle spreads his wings for flight once more. But alas for human plans; that flight proves all too short. Paul reaches Troas, and at the house of Christian Carpus, Amplias, a swift courier from the church at Rome, brings him this terrible message:*)

"O beloved and honored Paul, I have sad news for thee! The mighty city of Rome lies in ruins of smoking ashes! Though men dare not say it above their breath, 'tis whispered from mouth to mouth that the Emperor Nero himself did set imperial Rome on fire that he might revel in the vast drama of the burning of old Homer's Trojan city in literal reality. Be that as it may, this we know, that Nero hath laid the charge of this monstrous crime upon the innocent Christians; that heathen hatred hath flamed up against the Chris-

tians with the fury of the fires that did devour Rome; that Nero himself hath encouraged that hatred by the most horrible persecutions of our Christian brethren, so that the church of Christ in Rome is well-nigh extinct; and also that the emissaries of that persecution are rushing far and wide over all lands to hunt down the Christians for death.

"O Paul, I am sent to warn thee of thy danger, and urge thee to flee at once to some remote and secret hiding place, lest thou again be brought before Cæsar, from whose cruel vengeance thou shalt not escape."

"Amplias, my beloved brother in Christ, it is indeed heavy news that thou dost bring me from my dear church in Rome! Alas, alas, that such woe should fall upon the sheep of the Lord's flock! But as for myself, I count not my life dear unto me. Whensoever it be the Lord's will, I am ready to lay down my neck."

(*Even while they talk together there is a clamor at the outer door:*)

"Open! Open, in the name of the Emperor! . . . Abideth Paul the Christian in this house? I am an officer come from imperial Nero with orders for his arrest, as being a leader of that criminal sect that laid our glorious Rome in ashes."

"Yea, I am Paul, one of the least of the Christians; I am ready to go with thee as thou dost require; yet do I assure thee that neither I nor any other Christian hath had aught to do with that wicked deed, of burning majestic Rome, the Capital of the world."

"That shall be for the Emperor to decide; meanwhile it is mine to deliver thee in bonds in Rome, and

with all speed. Soldiers, chain the prisoner, and let us forth at once! This is a ringleader amongst these hated Christians; ye shall answer for him with your lives, if he escape."

Episode IV: "The End Crowns All"

(*Paul is back in Rome! A dark, deep dungeon in the Mamertine. Alone now save for Luke. Yet a pathetic letter brings his beloved Timothy. The swift trial is over, the death decree signed. We are now to see Paul's last day on earth. The face of Timothy is bathed with tears while he speaks:*)

"O my spiritual father and my more than friend, how can I say farewell? To thee I owe my spirit's life, my soul's hope, my heavenly inheritance! Thou art dearer to me than all else: I cannot, cannot give thee up!"

"Nay, Timothy, my beloved son in the Holy Spirit, say not so. Not to me but to our Lord Jesus dost thou owe thine all. And though I be taken from thee the Lord will abide with thee, which is far better. Timothy, I do love thee as mine own soul; be thou faithful even unto death, that in due time thou mayest receive the crown of life. And then thou and I shall rejoice together in the presence of our Christ! Let this glorious hope sustain thee, Timothy, my dearest son."

"O my father Paul, thou wert ever full of courage and of cheer! A brave heart hast thou and an overcoming faith. But now that the end draweth so nigh, I fain would ask thee a question that lieth close to my heart."

"What is it, dearest son? Ask what thou wilt, and I will answer thee."

"Here then is my heart's question: Dost thou now regret thy life of long labors and of sufferings for the Church? Hast thou been in any wise repaid for all thy scourgings and thy beatings, for all thy hungerings and fastings and weariness, for all thy defamings and revilings and false accusings? I must needs say it, for it is true, that thy life seemeth to me to have been one long and bitter failure: thine own nation did cast thee off, the churches thou hast founded have often proved unfaithful, thou hast suffered the loss of all earthly possessions and honors, thou hast lived as an outcast and a hated man. And for what? What reward hast thou received to compare with all the cost?

"O Paul, Paul, now that the end hath come, wouldest thou go through it all again; or wouldest thou rather choose to live as Saul the honored Pharisee and ruler of the Jews, as thou mightest have remained? Tell me, my father!"

"Timothy, dear son, I also will ask thee one question. I found thee a care-free and happy youth; I called thee to go forth with me on hard journeys! I have won thee no wealth and led thee into no honors; dost thou regret casting in thy life with mine? Wouldest thou turn thy back upon me, if it were now that I were calling thee as I did at the first?"

"Nay, nay, dear father Paul! Joyfully would I lay mine hand in thine to go forth to whatsoever toilsome journeys, whatsoever hardships and dangers, that I might walk with thee!"

"And wherefore, Timothy?"

"Wherefore? For love's sake, Paul my beloved!"

"Timothy! Thou art my noble-hearted son!

"And Timothy, thou hast thyself given my answer to thy heart's questioning. Yea, for love's sake—for love to the blessed Jesus, who loved me and gave himself for me, who hath filled my life with his glory and my heart with his grace, would I joyfully lay my hand in his, and go through tenfold more of these tribulations—which in comparison truly are as nothing!

"For love's sake! Ah, the measureless love of Jesus has been my reward all the way: and the love of Jesus it is that now fills me with rapture as I go to meet him yonder.

"Yea, Timothy, the end hath now come: I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith . . . Henceforth, the crown! The heavens are bending to receive me! . . . I shall soon . . . soon . . . see my Lord . . . whose I am! . . . Praise and thanks and glory be to his holy name! . . . Welcome, martyrdom! . . . Enter, thou soldier of Cæsar, who art here to lead me . . . welcome, thou executioner, come to conduct me through the bloody gate . . . beyond which I shall find and clasp the nail-pierced HAND . . . see and kiss the nail-pierced FEET . . . be gathered into the waiting ARMS, which for me were stretched out upon the CROSS OF GOLGOTHA . . . and be pressed close unto that riven loving HEART of Jesus of Nazareth, my King and my GOD!

"Master of my Life and Soul, into THY HANDS I commit my spirit!

"O death, where is now thy sting? O grave, where is now thy victory? . . . IT IS ALL, ALL . . . JESUS!"

EPISODE V: APOLLOS THE ELOQUENT SUMS IT UP

(*The news of Paul's martyrdom comes to Ephesus where Apollos is laboring. All the Christians beseech the eloquent preacher of Christ to address them concerning their lost leader; the following Lord's day evening there is a great gathering of the faithful. There are Scripture readings, songs broken with weeping, prayers of passionate sorrow yet triumphant faith, and by and by Apollos lifts his majestic form which towers above them all, his great head of hair like a lion's mane, his wonderful deep eyes glowing as coals of fire, and while men look upon him his face seems radiant as the face of an angel. In rich, vibrant voice that trembles with tears he begins to speak—and "they hush their very hearts who hear" that indescribable address, such as only a martyred Paul could call forth, and only an inspired Apollos could utter.*)

"Children of God—Followers of Jesus—Friends of our martyred Paul:

"THE END HATH COME!

"The end of our earthly companioning with that soaring spirit, that eagle-winged soul, whom men called Saul of Tarsus, and Paul—but whom God's Seraphim long since have named, 'Nesher Y'hovah,' the Eagle of the Lord! While we live upon the earth, we shall see his face no more.

"THE END HATH COME!

"The end of his unutterable toils and labors for the Church and Kingdom of our Christ! The end of his weariness and watchings, of his hungerings and thirstings, of his tempests and shipwrecks, of his mobbings

and scourgings, of his dungeons and his deaths! No man ever suffered so much, so meekly and so jubilantly as Paul hath suffered (yet singing) for Jesus; henceforth he shall suffer no more, but sing eternally.

"THE END HATH COME!

"Yea, the end of his death-grapple with Satan and hell; the end of buffeting his body and wrestling with the flesh; the end of soul-anguish over unconquered sin remaining in himself, which his pure soul could not endure. The battle hath been fought out, the victory nobly won, self-conquest through the grace of Christ become complete. The end hath come!

"But the end of travail is the beginning of triumph! The end of Paul's earth life shall prove the beginning of his greatest work on earth.

"That God elected and made use of Paul for exceeding great and precious things we know. Chosen of God to see that Just One, to hear the words of his mouth and to be his witness, Paul preached Jesus with wondrous power.

"Selected as a mighty one to break down the middle wall of partition standing strong between Jew and Gentile from of old, Paul made both one in the freedom of the glorious Gospel of Jesus.

"Chosen of God for this very thing, Paul became the profoundest thinker of all holy men of the ages, who have written by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost; so that Paul's epistles to the churches shall ever remain the deepest of 'the deep things of God' revealed in the Scriptures of truth. Not Moses the great Lawgiver, not Isaiah the chiefest of the Prophets, not David the sweet singer of Israel, hath written so deeply nor so

divinely as hath our wonderful Paul. Though dead, he by those writings yet speaketh and shall speak more and more mightily as the years increase, until there shall be time no longer! And his mighty missionary labors shall bear measureless fruit through ages yet unborn.

"Beloved, the Lord hath revealed unto my soul visions of the far future; down the ages I have seen our Paul, standing the princeliest figure in all God's chosen Church, molding the thought, inspiring the ambition, inciting the zeal, impelling the labor, and evoking the heroism of a thousand generations of faithful Christians!

"And now, hearken unto me, Beloved, while I deliver to you the mysterious message sent from the Unseen.

"Yesternight as I lay upon my couch after long wrestling with God in prayer with great strivings of spirit, it seemed to me that gently as I were falling on sleep I was lifted upon the golden pinions of a mighty angel and borne far aloft through the silent boundless regions of the sky. I know not for how long we journeyed, but at last we came within the gates of that City which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. There I did see ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands, an innumerable great multitude out of every kingdom and tribe and people and nation, standing before God and before the Lamb. The sky was above them all like unto a vast vault wrought from a radiant diamond; the earth beneath the feet of all was of pure and luminous gold; the air about them all was a gloriole of light. All faces

were bright with unmeasured bliss, all eyes were deep with divine vision, all lips overflowed with song.

"Then I dared to lift mine eyes on high, and behold I did see the very throne of infinite glory whereon was seated the SON OF THE HIGHEST, Jesus the Crucified. And, lo, close at his right hand was a seat of wondrous beauty, having a writing in gold which said, 'FOR THAT ONE FOR WHOM IT HATH BEEN PREPARED OF MY FATHER.' And on that seat of chiefest honor I did see, yea, with these eyes did I behold, PAUL—our own Paul for whom we weep to-day! And when I saw it I was glad.

"His face was wondrous glorious to look upon, and full of sweet content. But that which I did most note was, that his eyes seemed to see naught save ONE only: he was ever gazing full into the face of Jesus! And gazing, he was transformed into his very likeness!

"When I had looked long, the great angel caught me up again upon his shining wings and bore me swiftly back to earth; and he said to me, 'Go thou and tell what thou hast seen, unto them who have loved Paul the beloved of the Lord!' and I have told.

"So let us follow Paul, even as he followed Jesus: thus shall we also win unto that PRESENCE OF THE GLORY! Amen."

VIII

ELIJAH THE TISHBITE

A Drama of Heroism

NOTATION

This was the first drama sermon preached at a morning service, and therefore without the incidental assistance of special pulpit illumination and darkened room. The experiment definitely demonstrated however that the drama method is quite as adaptable to the somewhat more formal morning service as it is to the evening hour.

At this time also was introduced the plan of dividing the Episodes up into Incidents; and experience seems to prove that this is a distinct improvement in method. Always the speaker has found it best at the beginning of the sermon and before going "into character" to give clearly from memory the titles of all the Episodes and of the Incidents under each one. This enables the audience to keep up with the development of the story from having seen the outline of it in advance.

(HYMNS USED:

"Before Jehovah's awful throne."

"Our God, our help in ages past."

"How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord."

SCRIPTURE:

I Kings 17: 1-16.

RESPONSIVE READING:

Psalm 115.

ELIJAH THE TISHBITE

A Drama of Heroism

Episode I: The Flaming Prophet and the Recreant King

Incident 1. "Neither Dew nor Rain!"

(*Time: about 910 B.C. Place: Samaria, some fifty miles northward of Jerusalem; capital of the Ten Tribes. After Solomon's glorious kingdom had been rent in twain by the sin of Jeroboam and the amazing folly of Rehoboam, Solomon's son, six kings have reigned in Samaria; and now Ahab, most wicked of all Israel's wicked kings, sits upon the throne but is dominated by his yet more wicked wife, the heathen Jezebel. Sin is rampant everywhere.*

Suddenly as a flaming meteor from the sky the flaming prophet Elijah, unheralded and hitherto unknown, faces the recreant king:)

"Ahab, thou profane and wicked king, thus saith the God of Israel before whom as prophet spokesman here I stand: from this hour there shall fall neither dew upon the fields of Israel, nor rain upon her mountain sides, until that I as God's prophet give the word. Thy sins and the sins of Jezebel thy wife have called

down upon a sinful and adulterous land this sentence of God's wrath. I leave thee to thy woe: until the day of dread reckoning with thy heathen gods thou shalt see my face no more."

(*He turns, swiftly departs, and disappears.*)

Incident 2. The Prophet and the Ravens

"Behold, the Lord Jehovah, he hath sent me here; here have I dwelt in solemn solitude these many months. Dark, untrod wildernesses stretch around me far; wild beasts and birds the sole companions of my loneliness. Yet fiercest forest beasts do me no harm, seeming to know that I am sent of God. And great, black, flocking ravens bring to me at break of day, both bread and flesh for food; and again at evening hour they flying come, bringing once more in clasping claws both flesh and bread. The flowing brook supplies my needed drink.

"Thus have I lived and fared these long months through, while from yon hill-top I have watched the far fields scorch and wither under blazing skies. No drop of rain hath fallen; nor hath one gentle dew at night come to refresh the parched and burning grass. The forests on the hills stand brown and dead; the whole land lieth smitten as by flame; drought and dread famine walk forth hand in hand through all the length and breadth of Israel! Shall not mine afflicted nation learn from this, that in truth it is an evil and a bitter thing to turn away from God?

"But, alas, the husband of yon Jezebel is seated on the throne . . . and lying Baal prophets rule the land.

Long yet must God's avenging wrath be poured upon this people, drunken with their sin!"

Incident 3. The Meal That Wasted Not, the Oil That Did Not Fail

(*Brook Cherith has dried up; the word of the Lord has sent his prophet to Zidonian Zarephath. Elijah drawing nigh to the village sees a widow gathering up dry sticks:*)

"Good woman, hast thou in thine house water that a prophet of the Lord may drink? And wilt thou fetch me some?"

"Yea, my lord, I still have water, and will share with thee." (She starts to fetch it.)

"Woman, I pray thee, canst thou bring me food? I am faint from fasting through a long day's walk. I ask but little from thy slender store—one morsel of bread to meet my pressing need."

"Alas, thou man of God, bread have I none! For my loved lad, and me his mother lone, remains of meal one handful in the jar, and in the cruse one little bit of oil. Our need is bitter; we are near to death!"

"Widow of Zarephath, in God's name his prophet speaks. Make first from thy small store for God's own servant but one small cake to meet his direr need; and thus saith Israel's God the Lord: Thy jar of meal shall fail thee not, neither shall thy cruse of oil go dry, until the day God sendeth rain upon the earth. Believest thou his word?"

"Yea, lord, I do. The God of Israel never yet hath lied!"

Episode II: The Test Between Two Gods

Incident 1. "Art Thou He That Troubleth Israel?"

(*Third year of the drought. God's time draws on: "Go thou to Ahab; rain shall come." The king himself, with his believing head-man, Obadiah, out seeking pasture for his war-horses. Elijah meets Obadiah: "Go cry to Ahab, 'Here's Elijah! Here!'" The frightened officer carries the message, and the wrathful king comes rushing upon the prophet:*)

"Is it thou, thou troubler of Israel? I have sought thee far and I find thee here: beware now of my royal wrath and . . ."

"Peace, thou recreant king! Not I the troubler of Israel, nor the cause of Israel's woes; but thou, son of Omri the evil one; thou, false worshiper of false heathen gods.

"And now at my command, send thou through all thy smitten kingdom and call together unto Carmel's mount the people of thy land, and all thy multitudinous prophets of black lies. The full time hath come, which three years agone I warned thee of, the day of dread reckoning with thy heathen gods. Let not one of thy prophets fail to come to that proof of gods by heavenly fire! Jehovah bids thee go; defy him not."

(*The awed king goes as he is bid, and summons all Israel and the Baal priests up to the Carmel trysting place, the great assize.*)

Incident 2. "The God That Answereth by Fire!"

"Hearken, ye Tribes of Israel! Jehovah, God of Jacob your father, of Isaac, and of Abraham, would know why ye have all forsaken *Him?* Was it Baal who brought your fathers forth from Egypt's cruel bond? Spake Baal unto Moses on the flaming mount? Was it prophets of Baal who wrote for you these five great volumes of the Holy Law?

"How long go ye limping, Israelites, between two gods? If Jehovah be the true God, as I his one lone prophet do proclaim, then in that Jehovah's name, turn ye from Baal, worship God alone! But if perchance it be (as yon king-flattering multitude of prophets say) that Baal is indeed the god of all the earth and skies, then if so please you, worship him as fit and chosen lord. Judge ye!"

(*No answer comes from the assembled multitudes, but the people murmur and whisper to each other for and against the speaker. After waiting in vain many minutes for some decision of the great issue submitted to the people, Elijah the Tishbite speaks again:*)

"Then let the question be submitted to the judgment of yon skies! Hearken again, O Israel: Let there be builded two altars here upon this mount. Let this great multitude of Baal's priests give us two bullocks for the sacrificial test. Let them choose one, slay and lay it in proper order on one altar high; then pray to Baal for the heavenly fire to fall!

"And I likewise upon the altar of the Lord will lay the other bullock slain; then I will pray unto Jehovah God, beseeching that the heavenly fire may fall. *And*

this shall be the test: whichever god shall answer by the fire—be it Baal, or be it Jehovah Elohim—HE shall be acknowledged and worshiped by you all, as true and valid God of Israel! What say ye, sons of Jacob? Is it well?"

And all they make reply, "The word is good!"

(*Swiftly the many priestly hands build Baal's altar, while king and courtiers and the people watch. The bullock is slain and put in place, and all is ready for the solemn prayers. Four hundred praying priests form phalanx round the sacrifice, led in their rhythmic, mystic, swelling cries by one who is chief of all:*)

"B-a-a-l, O B-a-a-l, whom in solemn dread we worship, h-e-a-r u-s n-o-w! . . . N-o-w h-e-a-r u-s, B-a-a-l, Lord of all the earth! . . . O B-a-a-l, B-a-a-l, to whom in solemn dread we pray, hear us, h-e-a-r us, h-e-a-r u-s, H-e-a-r U-s, H-E-A-R U-S, *O BAAL, HEAR!* . . . Hour after hour we call upon thee, cry to thee—must we still cry in vain? . . . Behold, O Baal, how we weep and bleed for thee! . . . Send down thine holy fire upon the altar we have reared; devour the sacrifice we offer thee! . . ." (And thus over and over, round and round, goes the circle of their prayers:) "B-A-A-L . . . O B-A-A-L, whom in solemn dread we worship, H-E-A-R U-S N-O-W!"

"Hah, ye Priests of Baal, cry aloud; cry louder yet; and yet more loud! Your god is busy talking with some other gods it well may be, and hath not chanced as yet to notice you! Scream with sky-splitting tones, that he may hear!

"Or perchance he hath on a journey gone, and ye

must call him back by mighty cries; so shall he hear, return, and fling down fire to you who pray!

"Or even it may chance your god doth sleep, wearied by his toils in heavenly fields, and ye must wake him by yet louder yells!" (*So doth the desert prophet taunt his baffled foes!—and slowly sinks the sun towards the west.*)

"Ho, Israel! Their time hath ended now. Come near to me! . . . From this ruined, long-forsaken altar of the Lord I choose twelve stones—our twelve tribes they represent. Upon this simple altar which I rear, behold I lay the bloody sacrifice. And now lest any doubt, or speak of fraud, pour ye three times four great vessels of water over all, filling even the ditch about the altar level full. No human fire can burn that water up! . . .

"Behold, O Tribes of Israel, the hour of evening sacrifice is come. Let every soul be worshipful the while I pray unto Jehovah Elohim, our father's God:

> "Lord God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Israel,
> Let it be known in Israel this day that THOU art God!
> "Let it be known that I thy servant have done all by word from thee!
> "O Jehovah, hear me, hear and answer, I beseech, that this thy people may be full assured that thou alone art God in Israel, and unto thee the hearts of all must turn!
> "Send now thy FIRE!"

"Oh! . . . Oh, oh! . . . OH, BEHOLD! . . . See, yea, see! . . . The heavenly fire hath fallen from the skies! . . . The bullock sacrifice is all devoured in flame! . . . The very rocks and dust are swallowed

by that fire! . . . O God of our fathers, that sky-fallen fire doth eat the water up, as though 'twere fat of lambs, or beaten oil! . . . (*So cry the people in a great amaze.*) "Baal is proven false, the God of Abraham is proven true! . . . O men of Israel, we have sinned, we all have sorely sinned, in turning unto idols from our fathers' God. . . . Jehovah, he is God; JEHOVAH, HE IS GOD!"

(*"And Elijah said unto them, take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. And they took them; and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there."*)

EPISODE III: THE LONELY WATCHER ON CARMEL

Incident 1. "Go Again Seven Times"

(*"So Ahab went up to eat and to drink: and Elijah went up to the top of Carmel."*)

"Now, lad, go to yon westward slope, look far out over the great sea and bring me word that sign of rain appears. Here will I wait before the Lord and pray. . . .

"O God of Israel, through thy power alone all these great things are done by me to-day. O God, send now the rain thy servant hath foretold, I do beseech! . . . What seest thou, lad? Do clouds at once arise?"

"Nay, Master, the sky is clear, the waters lie as still as death; there is neither wind nor mist nor cloud."

"Go back again, my lad, and watch with care. . . .

"O great Jehovah, hear my urgent prayer! If rain come not, how shall I lift my head before the king?

He will scorn me as a prophet false. Send rain, I pray, and evidence my commission at thy hands! . . . How now, thou lad? Surely the clouds appear?"

"O Master, there is none in sight. Still clear the sky, dead calm the sea and air."

"Good lad, once more return unto thy post and watch. . . .

"O God of faithfulness, didst thou not promise me, Go show thyself to Ahab and the rain shall surely come? I claim thy promise, O my God. Send now the rain, according to thy word. . . . Thou comest, lad, to bring report of rising clouds!"

"Not yet, good master; there is not a sign. The westering sun doth flame like unto a ball of fire; that fire the level sea flings back as red."

"Fear not, my faithful one; the rain will come. Go yet again for me and watch the sky. . . .

"Do I not trust thee, O my God? And dost thou not reward the trusting soul? Oh, send the rain, thou God in whom I trust, that men may see my trust rewarded by my God! . . . Come, lad, what hast thou seen at last?"

"Still there is nothing. Sky and sea and sun are as they were, save that the sun sinks lower in the breathless sky."

"Go back, go back, and watch once more. . . .

"Thou God of Israel, look on thy suffering people, I do pray. Thy land is perishing for rain, but far more thy people perish for their God. The falling fire made them cry out amazed; but send the gracious rain that they may turn their hearts to thee and live! . . . O lad, I pray thee tell me now that rain draws nigh!"

"Alas, I cannot, for there is yet no sign of rain; no lightest wind, no smallest cloud appears."

"Nevertheless, we still will not despair! Go thou again and watch; again will I betake myself to prayer. . . .

"O great and glorious God, myself am naught; all sons of men are naught compared with thee. But if rain come not men in scorn will say, 'Elijah's God cares not to keep his word.' I am jealous for thy great name, O God: send rain, I pray thee, for thy great name's sake! . . . Dear lad, dost come to say my prayer is heard; that rain doth promise now?"

"Would God that it were so, O Master mine! Nay, there still is nothing that appears."

"Six times, O patient son, hast thou returned and watched yon burning sky for coming rain. Go back this seventh time; methinks the end draws nigh. . . .

"Yea, Lord, my will I yield to thine: I strive not, urge not, argue not with thee. If thou send rain, 'tis good; if thou withhold, 'tis likewise good. Thy will, not mine be done!"

"Hearken, my master; hearken to me now! Far in the west I see a cloud arise, a little cloud no bigger than my hand; but winds begin to murmur in the trees and stir the silver silence of the sea."

"Dear God, my prayer is heard! I thee adore."

Incident 2. "A Sound of Abundance of Rain"

"Behold, the skies grow black with wind and cloud! The great rain of God comes sweeping o'er the sea! . . .

"Run, lad, and tell the king: bid him to order forth his chariot, prepared for swift drive to Jezreel in the plain, lest mountain torrents overwhelm his way.

"But what is this wondrous flood of life I feel? As though the spirit of the mountain wind had entered me, my feet are as the feet of some wild roe!"

(*"And the hand of the Lord was on Elijah; and he girded up his loins and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel."*)

Episode IV: The Fierce Queen's Furious Hate

Incident 1. A Messenger of Wrath

"Ho, all who dwell within! Tarrieth here Elijah, the Tishbite prophet from the Northern Hills? If yea, then in the queen's name let him come forth anon."

"Yea, I am he: who calls?"

"The messenger of august Jezebel, puissant queen. She bids me sharply speak to thee in haste, warning thee forthwith of her fierce wrath. Now hearken to this message which she sends by me:

" 'So let the gods eternal do to me,
Yea, even more and worse, if by to-morrow's sun
I make not thy life even like unto the life
Of those my honored prophets thou hast slain!'

"And Seer, take thou this word from me the messenger: Better were it for thee hadst thou not been born, than that fierce Jezebel find thee here alive to-morrow morn!"

Incident 2. "He Arose and Went for His Life"

"Haste, lad, oh, haste, and flee with me! As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, there is but a step between me and death. Take thou thy staff and scrip, and let us hence at once. Queen Jezebel will slay me here if I be found; her fury flames against me like fierce Tophet's fires, and I have no defense."

"Whither shall we flee, dear Master, and how escape her wrath?"

"All night must we journey southward through the dark; at daybreak we will hide us from the sight of men. Thus shall we journey night by night, and ever southward till we reach far Horeb and be safe."

"Alas, my Master, that is very far!"

"I know it, yet must we even go."

(*Thus they journey southward from Jezreel, avoiding traveled roads and thronging towns, until they have passed through all the Holy Land, to Beersheba on the furthest border of Judea's coast. There Elijah leaves his worn and weary lad and goes alone a long day's journey into the Idumean wilderness.*)

Incident 3. "And He Requested for Himself That He Might Die"

(*The wearied prophet is seen fallen upon the ground beneath a juniper tree:*)

"All, all is lost. Defeated am I, hated, and cast out. I lived for God and loved God's Israel; yet all my work was naught. Israel hated me, and Israel's king; all hated God in whose great name I spake. God's altars

they cast down, God's prophets slew; God's covenant they scorned, and me his Voice. I alone am left; why should I longer live? . . . O God, I pray thee, take away my life." (Overcome with sorrow and weariness he sleeps.)

"Elijah! Elijah! Seer of the holy God, awake! Arise and eat."

"What meaneth this? Who hath prepared this food? Here find I fire; and baken on the burning coals, a cake; and here a cruse of water close at hand . . . Yes, I will eat and drink; then sleep again. . . ."

"Elijah, prophet of the living God, arise and eat. Horeb, the mount of God which thou dost seek, is distant many days which thou must walk. This food divinely sent shall give thee strength for all that weary way."

Episode V: With God on "The Mount of God"

Incident 1. The Voice in the Cavern

"Fast have I come, and far. Now Horeb's holy heights around me tower and I am safe; fierce Jezebel may seek me here in vain. In this cool cavern I will make my home, far from the strife of tongues and scorn of men. Here let me live in peaceful solitude, the world forgotten and by that world forgot. . . .

"Hark! What is it that I hear? . . . what strange deep voice that speaketh from this cavern's deeper depths of gloom?"

"Elijah! Prophet of God to Israel, what dost thou here, far from thine own appointed work? Who gave

thee leave to flee thy place, forsake thy charge? Speak, prophet of the Lord!"

"I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken his covenant, thrown down his altars, and slain his prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life to take it away . . . therefore am I fled from fruitless labor, from a falling nation, and from hatred fierce."

"Hearken. I am the angel that fed thee in the wilderness; companion unseen of all thy wanderings. I send thee now, Elijah, from this cavern dark to stand upon the mount before the Lord. Himself will speak with thee and be the Judge."

Incident 2. The Wind—the Earthquake—and the Fire

(*Smitten in heart and marveling, Elijah makes his way towards the narrow outlet of his cave through which he catches glimpses of things without, which suddenly spring up.*)

"Oh, awful sounds! I hear the roar as of ten thousand rushing tempest winds that storm along the sky! Beyond this narrow valley I can see great towering crags of rock uprooted by the wind, and flung far down upon the roaring depths below! Majestic, fearful sight—one half yon mighty mountain is torn loose . . . hurled in tremendous ruin to the plain. Infinite Force I see: O God of awful Power, do I see THEE?"

"Not so, Elijah! (spake the solemn voice). Not in that wondrous wind doth God go forth."

"Oh, yet more awful things! The mountains reel

around me like as drunken men; the very earth is shaken to its depths. A mighty earthquake seems to hurl all things together in a horrid heap. Omnipotent Jehovah, God of all the earth, do I indeed see THEE?"

"Not so, Elijah; not in that awful earthquake walketh God."

"But see the fearful FIRE! Fire, that doth devour the solid earth! Fire, that seemeth to leap up and lick the sky! A flood of fire that like the great sea flows and flows, sweeping in tides as far as eye can reach. Oh, fierce and fearful fire! Thou God who dwellest in the holy Flame, in this unmeasured flame do I now look on THEE?"

"Not so, Elijah! (that solemn voice responds). Not in that fearful fire doth God flame forth. . . .

"Not in the wind that rends and hurls; not in the earthquake's power that overwhelms; not in the fierceness of the fire that burns doth God reveal the utmost of HIMSELF. These things are messengers of his, but God himself is Gentleness and Love. Go thou forth now, Elijah; God himself will speak to thee."

Incident 3. "A Sound of Gentle Stillness"

(*"And after the fire a still small voice. And Elijah wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave: and behold there came a Voice unto him."*)

"Elijah, my prophet called and sent, what doest thou here in this far wilderness? Did I not send thee to Ahab and to Israel?"

"Yea, Lord of hosts, my God; and I have proved

most jealous for thy Name. But Ahab hearkened not; Israel scorned thy messenger. Thy covenant forsaken utterly, thine altars overthrown, thy prophets slain, I, even I only, am left; my life they seek with bitter hate. My work was all in vain."

"I hear, Elijah; thou hast served me well, trusty and true while all seemed false but thee. Yet, to thee all unknown seven thousand faithful ones were found in Israel, the Lord's Remainder in a faithless land. Nor was thy work in vain—nor ended yet. Go thou, return, stand in thy lot and serve: not wicked Jezebel, nor Ahab, nor backslidden Israel shall prevail to harm thee, kept by my right hand. And when thy work is finished thou shalt come in fiery chariot as a victor home.

"Yet bear with thee henceforth this truth divine, this mystery the world nor knows nor comprehends—this which I have led thee to the wilderness to learn. God is not served the most and best by wrath, by bloody judgments poured on sinful men. My name is LOVE: by love my kingdom comes, until that HE shall come, the King of Love; who by the might of love divine shall conquer and shall rule o'er all the earth. Him do I reveal to thee to-day: behold Him now, the very CHRIST OF GOD!

"Keep thou this secret locked within thine heart: tell it to none, for fullness of the time is far to come.

"But thou, go thou and serve; stand in thy lot, my prophet as of old—until that thou my chariot shall see."

"Yea, Lord; I humbly, gladly go."

(*Amen*)

IX

ELIJAH THE TISHBITE

A Drama of Destinies

NOTATION

If the apostle Paul be the preacher's hero in the New Testament, Elijah is certainly his hero ideal in the Old Testament. Not so commanding a figure as the mighty Moses, nor so human and lovable as the sweet singer of Israel, David, Elijah yet surpasses both in a certain fascination of the heroic: and in the marvelous splendor of his death scene, even more than in the mysterious divinity of the death of Moses, Elijah's story is matchless.

In selecting Scripture passages to be read in connection with any drama sermon it is desirable, of course, to choose that which will best envisage, or certainly definitely suggest, the main elements of the story. In this case that climax event, Elijah's rapture up to heaven, was chosen.

The writer would add that he himself found both the Elijah studies specially fruitful in inspiration for the pulpit prayers. The last hymn in the list proved peculiarly appropriate.

(HYMNS USED:

"Praise the Lord: ye heavens adore him."

"Rise, my soul, and stretch thy wings."

"For all the saints who from their labors rest."

SCRIPTURE:

II Kings 2: 1-15.

RESPONSIVE READING:

Psalms 149, 150.)

ELIJAH THE TISHBITE

A Drama of Destinies

Episode I: The Crime That Calls for the Curse

Incident 1. "A Man's a Man for a' That"

"Naboth, I, the king, would speak with thee concerning thy vineyard which lieth near my royal palace in Jezreel. It is my kingly wish to have that vineyard as a portion of my palace grounds. I will therefore give thee in its stead a vineyard larger and still better than thine own; or if thou dost choose I will pay thee a fitting price in gold. Speak, therefore, and let me know thy choice."

"Nay, King Ahab, neither one nor other do I choose."

"But, man, I am the king! The king's will must be regarded: moreover I offer thee fairest terms, gold to the full value of thy land, or another vineyard better than thine own. I would do thee no wrong; I scorn as king to take advantage of thy lowly rank to seize the land which I desire. Yet my kingly will must be observed by thee. Which shall it therefore be: a better vineyard in exchange for thine, or gold to its full worth?"

"Neither, King Ahab. The land is mine, an inheritance from my fathers and my sire. And God forbids that a son of Israel alienate his heritage, except for

direst need. Need I have none; from my loved vineyard I and mine can live in good comfort and in full content.

"I know that thou art king; as Israel's king I honor thee—though I could honor more wert thou more faithful unto Jehovah, Israel's God. But if thou wert tenfold king, I would not for fear or favor sell thee mine inheritance."

"Now as I live, thou art a churlish and ill-favored fool! Get hence and see my face no more, lest I should do thee harm."

Incident 2. Jezebel Will Get That Vineyard for the King!

"Dear husband Ahab, why is thy countenance so sad to-day? Thou dost lie here upon thy couch, refusing food and all fair things of life. Shall I summon thy physician? Art thou sick? What aileth the, O Ahab, my dear husband and my king?"

"Nay, Jezebel, my royal wife; I am not sick in body, though I am at heart—for that, physicians hold no remedy."

"Alas, my spouse, what is it that so troubleth thee? I pray thee tell."

"Thou knowest, love, that vineyard fair, hard by our palace in Jezreel? I have desired it as mine to make thereof a garden of rare herbs for our delight: and behold that churlish Naboth who doth own it hath with ill words refused it me, at any covenant or price. My heart was set on it—and I am sad."

"What, Ahab, thou royal man! Art thou not then

the king in Israel? Thou dost not reign, the while thou dost permit a low-born churl's defiance of thy kingly will. Give me thy royal seal: I'll get for thee that vineyard, and forthwith. Arise, eat bread, make merry as the king is wont: think no more upon the vineyard, till I bring thee word."

Incident 3. "The Last Argument of Kings"

(*The house of Ben-Ezra, chief of the council of Jezreel. Gathered there are all the councilors of the city. Ben-Ezra speaks:*)

"Ye elders and nobles of Jezreel, I have received from our august Jezebel, puissant queen, an urgent letter sealed with King Ahab's seal, which readeth thus:

"'COUNCILORS:

"'As soon as this royal message reacheth you, proclaim a fast and an assembly in Jezreel; bring forth Naboth with all solemnity, set him aloft, on trial for his life; seek out two fellows of the baser sort who can be hired with gold, and bid them witness against Naboth as traitor to his king and God. Then on that witness have him forth at once; see that he be stoned in his own plat of ground. Let nothing fail of this which I command, lest my royal wrath be visited on all.

"'Behold the seal and signature,

"'QUEEN JEZEBEL.'

"Councilors, ye have heard the queen's decree. Our hearts, our wills, our consciences, lie in her hand: we

must forthwith fulfill the queen's desires. What is your vote, ye nobles of Jezreel?"

(*All*) "Let it be done as Jezebel commands."

Episode II: A Curse Cometh Upon the King

Incident 1. "Naboth is Not Alive, but Dead"

"My royal husband, I have good news for thee. The vineyard which thou didst so desire is thine: behold I, Jezebel, do give it thee. Go down to Jezreel, king, and take it for thine own."

"My love, a woman wonderful art thou! 'Twas scarce yestermorn that thou didst promise it; to-day thou bringest me the word of joy. Thou art my peerless wife and queen! But tell me, love, how this hath come to pass?"

"My king, seek not to learn whence cometh every good! Doth it not thee suffice to know that Naboth, yon churlish fool who wrought thee such despite, will so defy thy royal will no more? . . .

"Naboth is not alive, but dead."

Incident 2. "The Curse of the Lord is in the House of the Wicked"

"Elijah, Elijah, prophet of the Lord thy God!"

"Speak, Lord, thy servant waiteth for thy word."

"Go thou to Jezreel. Front that king Ahab, and curse him in my name. Wicked Jezebel by fraud and force hath caused the death of Naboth, to this end that Ahab may seize on Naboth's vineyard as his own. The king hath gone to take possession of the blood-

stained land; there shalt thou find him. Go forthwith."

Incident 3. "Hast Thou Found Me, O Mine Enemy?"

"King Ahab, hast thou even killed the owner, and also seized his land? The cry of Naboth's blood ascendeth unto God, thou guilty king!"

"GOD! Scarce do I come within the bounds of Naboth's vineyard, when behold, Elijah! . . . towering before me like that fiery pillar of old days flaming with wrath on all its fiery front! . . .

"Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?"

"I have found thee—because thou hast sold thyself to work iniquity. And thy reward? A mess of pottage—with a curse from God. Hearken therefore to God's word by me, thou wicked king. Thus saith Jehovah, God of Israel: In the selfsame place where wild dogs roaming seeking for their food licked up the blood of murdered Naboth slain by thee, in that same place shall wild dogs lick thy blood, yea, even thine, though thou be king.

"Nor shalt thou be alone, unhappy man, in this destruction called down by thy sin; for thy posterity shall be cut off, thine house shall be as that of Jeroboam cursed of God.

"And as for Jezebel thy wife, who taught and stirred thee up in wickedness—by the rampart of Jezreel shall dogs devour her carcass; so that none may bury her, nor any say: Here lieth Jezebel, who was the Queen.

"O earth, earth, earth, bear witness! And ye heavens, behold! Who ever equalled Ahab in dark

sin? Who so forsook the one true God to follow idols that can neither hear nor help? Ahab shall therefore sink beneath the blighting curse of God; and none shall mourn."

Episode III: "Careless Seems the Great Avenger!"

Incident 1. Ahab's Apparent Prosperity

(*Terrified by the curse pronounced upon him, Ahab humbles himself for a time before the Lord, and God gives him a further chance. Shortly before this time, by God's help, Ahab has won two great victories over Ben-hadad, king of Syria. His policy now is to strengthen Israel by an alliance with Judah and Jerusalem against Syria. The king at Jerusalem, Jehoshaphat, is willing; goes down to Samaria in state; is welcomed by Ahab with a great feast. Ahab speaks:*)

"The past of strife between Judah and our Ten Tribes is all forgotten, O glorious king Jehoshaphat. There is a league of friendship between thee and me, O king. Wilt thou go with me to war against Syria to take again Ramoth-gilead, which by right is mine?"

"Yea, Ahab, king of Israel, I will go; my people and my chariots of war are all at thy command. Yet enquire, I pray thee, at the word of God to-day, that we may know if He will grant success."

"Behold, Jehoshaphat, here be four hundred prophets I have called, of whom we may enquire. . . .

"Hearken, ye prophets whom Queen Jezebel doth feed, shall I now go to war against Ramoth-gilead, or shall I forbear?"

"Go up! For the Lord shall deliver it into thy victorious hand. Go up and prosper, O great King!"

"Hear these, Jehoshaphat, how with one voice they prophesy success!"

"Yea, that is good: but do they speak for our Jehovah God? Hast thou not here, O Ahab, one prophet of the Lord beside, that we might enquire of him?"

"One whom I hate! Micaiah, son of Imlah: but he never prophesieth good concerning me. Yet though I hate him I will have him here, if thou require."

"Let not the king be grieved."

"Messenger, bring hither with all haste Micaiah, son of Imlah, prophet of the Lord."

(*The messenger finds Micaiah, and having delivered the king's command says to him:*)

"Behold, Micaiah, all other prophets have spoken good: let now thy word be as the word of one of them."

"As the Lord Jehovah liveth, what he giveth me to speak, that only will I speak."

"Micaiah, we await thy word. Shall we go against Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall we forbear?"

"Go up and prosper! For the Lord shall deliver it over unto thee."

"Come, come; no mockery! Tell me the truth at once."

"I saw all Israel scattered on the hills. 'These have

no king or leader,' said the Lord; 'let each return unto his house in peace.' "

"Did I not tell thee, king, that evil only, he would prophesy?"

"Then hearken, Ahab, to the word of God!—

"I saw in my vision Jehovah seated on his throne;
Around him stood in serried ranks the heavenly hosts;
Then spake the Lord: 'Who shall entice the king of Israel
That he may go and fall at Ramoth-gilead in fight?'
Then came one spirit forth, O king, and caused
All these thy prophets to speak lies, that thou mayest fall. *And fall thou shalt!*
If thou return at all in victory and peace
Jehovah hath not spoken at my mouth. Bear witness, Israel!"

Incident 2. The Battle at Ramoth-gilead

(*"So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, went up to Ramoth-gilead."*)

"Jehoshaphat, thou noble king, I leave to thee the glory of the victory to-day. Do thou go into battle in all the splendor of thy kingly robes, and lead the hosts. As lowly officer will I disguise myself and fight unknown. So shall the splendor of the triumph be unto thee alone, my brother and my friend."

(*The king of Syria gives orders to his men:*) "Soldiers, my quarrel to-day is with Ahab, king of Israel, alone: fight therefore with none else. Range ye through all the hosts and find my foe; smite him to death and victory is mine! . . . Set forward now; fight bravely; win us great renown!"

(*A Syrian soldier speaks thus with himself:*) "One arrow only in my quiver now remains. Would that with it I might smite Israel's king! But who knoweth where he fights? Yet will I draw this arrow to its head and let it fly straight into yon massed multitude of foes: perchance its flight may find some mighty warrior's heart."

Episode IV: God's Curse Arrives!

Incident 1. "The mills of God grind slowly, But they grind exceeding small."

"Jehu, my charioteer, turn thou thy hand and bear me from the host, for I am wounded sore. A flying arrow hath found a break between mine armor's joints and pierced my bleeding breast. . . . Yet God forbid that I should flee the fight, and thus dishearten all my warriors brave. . . . Hold fast thy place here at the army's front—but press thine arm unseen behind my back and stay me up, lest it be known that I am wounded unto death. And though my heart's blood poureth from this wound, sound loud my trumpet now . . . and once again! Let Ahab's army still go sweeping on!"

Incident 2. "Le Roi Est Mort!"

"Jehu, thou charioteer of Ahab, what hath chanced? Why sinks the king in thy supporting arms? Is he overcome with weariness . . . or hath he wounds? Truly we left him in thy watch and care: if he have

suffered thou must give account. Speak thou: what aileth Ahab, our dread king?"

"Alas, thou noble captain of the host, THE KING IS DEAD!"

"The king is dead!" . . . "The king is dead!" . . . "The king is dead!" . . . "Ahab our king is dead! . . ." Swift flies the fateful word from mouth to mouth. And soon the spreading cry is heard: "To his own city, every man! Let each seek safety as he may! The king is dead: the army hath no master to command; let every man return to his own house in peace."

(*"And one washed Ahab's chariot in the pool of Samaria, and the dogs licked up his blood."*)

Incident 3. "And of Jezebel Also Spake the Lord"

(*Swift years sweep by. Jehu the son of Nimshi is master in Israel, and God hath laid on him the completion of his curse on all the family of wicked Ahab. Jehu in his war chariot enters Samaria, where Jezebel with painted face and head attired, looks down upon him from an upper window of her palace, and thus cries:*)

"Comest thou in peace, thou Zimri, thy master's murderer? If so, ascend and let us plan together, thou and I; both of us mighty, we can rule the earth!"

"Hah, temptress! I have commission from the Lord of hosts, and I am come to visit on thine head Jehovah's curse! . . . Ho, there! Be there any in those rooms that hold with me who am come in the great Jehovah's name? Let him look forth. . . .

Three strong eunuchs look out at me! Seize that wicked Jezebel and hurl her down! . . .

"The curse of God hath come to Jezebel! Drive on and crush her underneath avenging chariot wheels. . . . Now, Bidkar, my captain, let us seek in this her palace, food and drink; for we are wearied by our journey long."

"Nothing loath am I, Jehu my king, for I have fasted since the early morn. . . ."

"Now, Bidkar, if thou hast satisfied thine appetite, go see to that accursed woman, Jezebel, and bury her; for in truth the daughter of a king was she. . . ."

"Jehu, my king, Jezebel have I sought, but found her not; save only skull gnawed bare, and bone of hands and feet. Wild dogs have dragged all else away, devouring as they went!"

"Behold, O Bidkar, the curse of God fulfilled: for thus spake Elijah, prophet of the Lord:

" 'In the portion of Jezreel shall dogs eat the
flesh of Jezebel:
Her carcass shall be as dung upon the open field,
So that in Jezreel none shall ever say,
This is Jezebel, who once was Queen.' "

Episode V: "From Glory to Glory"

Incident 1. "The Chariots of Israel and the Horsemen Thereof!"

(*"And it came to pass, when the Lord would take up Elijah by a whirlwind into heaven that Elijah went*

with Elisha from Gilgal." From Gilgal to Beth-el, from Beth-el to Jericho, from Jericho to the Jordan they journey, Elisha refusing to leave his master. Elijah ceases to urge, and says:)

"Come then with me, dear friend; together we will walk through Jordan's flood. . . . With this my mantle I will smite the wave. . . . Roll back, ye waters! Make a pathway for the sons of God.

"And now, my son, ask me what I shall do for thee. What is thy dearest wish?"

"My father, all thy wealth is in the Spirit of the Lord. Grant me the first-born's heritage: a double portion of the Spirit that doth rest on thee."

"A hard thing indeed it is that thou dost ask of me! Yet the Lord doth show me this, that if thou be steadfast in thy thought and gaze, so seeing me when I am taken up, thy prayer is granted. This shall be thy sign."

"I see! I see! Yea, the sign is mine! Behold, Elijah in the chariot of fire! Behold the flashing glory of his face, transfigured as by the vision of his God! And see that multitude of flaming wings like angel charioteers that sweep the sky! My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof . . . ! HALLE-LU-JAH!—He hath gone to GOD!"

Incident 2. "With Him in the Holy Mount"

(*A thousand earthly years have come and gone. The aged apostle John speaks with his own beloved disciple, Polycarp. The eager disciple cries:*)

"Hast thou indeed looked on that holy prophet's

face? Hast thou beheld Elijah, God's beloved? O John, my master, tell me I beseech: what was his seeming? describe in full for me his form, his face, his eyes—face, that fronted wicked Ahab's wrath and showed no fear; form, that never felt the wrack of cruel death; eyes that have looked upon the living God himself! Speak of Elijah, master; tell me all."

"Full many years, my Polycarp, have passed since we were with HIM in the holy mount—with him whose glory there revealed surpassed all else. Not Moses, not Elijah great, could hold our eyes and thought away from HIM!

"Yet do I remember all these many years the mystic splendor of Elijah's face, the marvel of his glorious eyes. Even Moses wanted somewhat of his majesty.

"Nor can I now describe. I only know he seemed to me as one filled to the full with flaming holiness; as one whose heart was given all to God—not one least corner kept for love of self. I seemed to see in his deep eyes that burning hatred of iniquity, which awed ungodly Ahab, Israel's king—but deepened and multiplied a thousandfold by a thousand years of fellowship with God.

"Long have I pondered, Polycarp, on that which we three saw in Elijah's mighty, marvelous and mystic face when we were with him in the holy mount.

"This is my lesson:

"Life's love and passion here
Fixes the Soul's fashion forever and for aye:
Onward, all is growth!
Elijah's flaming passion was ever Holiness,
His whole heart's love was GOD:

Therefore all ages of Eternity
Will grow him more and more in Holiness;
Will show him more and more of God!

"May that great prize be thine, and mine, my Polycarp!"

(May that great prize be yours and mine, my people dear! Amen.)

X

JOHN, THE EAGLE OF THE JORDAN

The Herald of the King

The Jordan Eagle is the later Elijah, coming in the spirit and power of that hero of old. "Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist": wherefore the grandeur of his life and the tragedy of his death prove specially suitable for dramatic portrayal. This present sermon may stand as a typical case showing, first, the value of the dramatic method for giving vital interpretation of Bible incident and teaching; and second, how measureless the work that drama sermons demand. For the preacher must become familiar with his chosen character in his personality, acts, words, and mission; then he must envision him, muse upon him, live with him, until his own spirit is permeated; and then he must so act out, live out, his character's part as to accomplish a great double objective, the one dramatic, the other spiritual. For while he must give a true, vivid and artistic representation of character and happenings, the preacher must even more worthily interpret and impress the spiritual lessons which the Bible record means. For clearly, drama-preaching must always be *preaching*—never deteriorate into merely dramatic acting. "Preach the preaching that I bid thee": in thine own way, but preach my word!

(HYMNS USED:

"Begin, my tongue, some heavenly theme."
"The race that long in darkness pined."
"On Jordan's banks the Baptist's cry."

SCRIPTURE:

Matthew, chapter 3.

RESPONSIVE READING:

Psalms 11 and 13.)

JOHN, THE EAGLE OF THE JORDAN

The Herald of the King

Episode I: The Angelic Annunciation

Incident 1. Gabriel's Message

(*An autumn Sabbath morning; the Holy Place of the Temple; time of burning the sacred incense; Zacharias, the aged priest ministrant, stands with uplifted hands at the altar alone in the sacred silence. Suddenly a wondrous sight: a radiant angel appears at the right side of the altar, half-enveloped by the incense smoke. He speaks to the startled priest:*)

"Fear not, Zacharias, thou holy man of God. Long have thy prayers ascended that God would grant thee a portion in the Hope of Israel: thy prayers were heard though the answer waited. Now the time hath come. Thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son in her old age, and that son shall be the great forerunner of God's Anointed One who is about to appear. He shall be a Nazarite from his birth, and his name shall be called John."

"But, O blessed Angel, how is a son possible to us? Canst thou not give me some divine sign that shall evidence the truth of thy promise?"

"Zacharias, why dost thou doubt God's message? Gabriel am I, that stand ever in Jehovah's presence; I have brought thee straight from him a word that can-

not be broken. Yet since thou dost require a sign in proof, thou shalt have a sign that will at once attest my message, reprove thine unbelief, and shut thee in with God. From this moment until thou dost see and confess his gracious promise fulfilled thou shalt neither speak nor hear a human word: only God meanwhile shall whisper deep thoughts unto thy soul."

(*Zacharias trembling goes out unto the waiting people, lays fingers upon his dumb lips, lifts awe-struck face heavenward, and then guided by assisting priests makes his slow way from the temple, to proceed to his distant home.*)

Incident 2. The Visit of the Virgin

(*A half year later the Virgin Mary arrives at the home of Zacharias and Elisabeth in the hill country of Judea, and salutes Elisabeth in love and amaze. Elisabeth cries out:*)

"Blessed art thou, my kinswoman Mary—blessed above all other women! For indeed the Son which thou shalt bear is to be the Lord of Life. And how am I honored that the mother of my Lord should seek me out in my humble home! Yea, blessed is she that hath believed—believed with perfect and simple faith the promise sent her by the angel messenger. Thy believing faith, Mary, is the crown of thy love to God!"

"O Cousin Elisabeth—

"My soul doth magnify the Lord.
My spirit doth rejoice in God my Saviour;
For he hath remembered his servant in her lowliness,
And from this hour all ages will count me happy.

"Great things hath the Almighty done for me;
And holy is his name!
Age after age doth he show his mercy,
Yea, to those that do reverence him.

"Great are the deeds of his arm;
He confoundeth the devices of the headstrong;
Princes he doth dethrone, the lowly doth he exalt;
The hungry he loadeth with gifts, empty-handed he sendeth away the rich.

"Never forgetful of his mercy,
He hath stretched out his hand to Israel his servant,
Even as he hath promised to our fathers—
Mercy for Abraham and for his race forever!"

"Mary, I do rejoice with thee in truth! And now, beloved cousin and sister, abide thou with me these coming weeks that thou and I may hold sweet converse together in God."

Episode II: "Unto Us a Son is Given"

Incident 1. A Name for the Child of Promise

(*The months pass; Mary has returned to Nazareth; the fullness of time comes and Elisabeth bears a son. The women gather to rejoice with her, and to name her child.*)

"Hail, Elisabeth; all hail! Surely the Lord hath been gracious unto thee and hath blessed thee. We come to rejoice with thee in thy joy, even as we have sorrowed with thee in thy long sorrow of waiting. Truly saith the Holy Scripture, 'Hope deferred maketh

the heart sick; but when the desire cometh it is a tree of life.' Thy long desire hath been granted unto thee; now it blossometh as a beautiful tree of life which groweth in the garden of the Lord, and it shall bear sweet fruit of blessing unto thee and thy husband Zacharias.

"And now, Elisabeth, kinswoman and friend, we come as is fitting and right, to bestow upon the son God hath given thee a worthy name. And what name more worthy, more revered, and more meet for him to bear than that of his godly father? We will therefore name thy son the name of thy beloved husband Zacharias."

"Friends beloved and kinswomen dear, I do thank you for your loving kindness and your help; your words are indeed sweet to mine ears. But as pertaineth to the name, Zacharias it cannot be. Nay, his name is John."

"But, Sister Elisabeth, why that name? Thou hast none near of kin who bear the name of John, neither thy husband's father nor thine own, nor grandsire, brother, cousin, nay not one. Shall we not call him Zacharias then?"

"Nay, his name is John."

"What saith his father, friends? Ask him. Perchance he shall choose Zacharias as the name. Make signs how he would have the infant called. Bring tablet and a pen."

"HIS NAME IS JOHN."

Incident 2. The Song of Dumb Zacharias

(*Zacharias, immediately that he has written the name, springs to his feet, his face lighted with holy rapture, and lifting hands and eyes towards heaven he cries out in a great voice:*)

"Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel;
For he hath visited his people and wrought them redemption;
He hath raised up for us a Saviour in strength,
Yea, in the house of David his servant.

"So hath he promised of old by the lips of his Prophets;
To save us from our foes and the hands of our haters,
To perform the mercy sworn to our fathers,
Remembering his holy covenant of grace.

"This was the oath which he sware to Abraham our father;
That freed from fear and the hand of our foes
We should serve him uprightly and in pureness of heart
In his very presence all our days.

"And thou, Child, shalt be called Prophet of the Most High,
Going in front of the Lord to make ready his way;
To give unto his people the knowledge of salvation,
Through the remission of all their sins.

"All this due to the tender mercy of our God;
Who will make the Dawn to break on us from Heaven,
To shine upon those sitting in the darkness of death,
To guide our footsteps into the Highway of Peace."

Episode III: "Your Young Men Shall See Visions"

Incident 1. A Midnight Vision of Marvel

(*The child John grows to young manhood under the godly training of his parents, meanwhile seeing and learning to estimate the religious sham and measureless sin of Israel of his day. Zacharias and Elisabeth die when John is some twenty years of age; the young man then turns from the "organized hypocrisy" of Jerusalem, and seeks God in the mighty solitudes of the wilderness. A cave his home, locusts and wild honey his food; cold water his drink; and as for raiment, merely the old prophetic garb, a coarse hair-cloth tunic with leathern girdle. So faring, he spends the years of his life until he is thirty in the vast solitudes; communing with God and his own great soul; seeing visions, dreaming dreams, and learning lessons of measureless meaning. Thus is the Prophet of the Highest prepared for his Work!*)

"Oh! wondrous sight! All the night have I watched here at my cavern's mouth, communing with nature and the World Unseen. At eventide I beheld the sun go down into vast banks of dismal clouds, where its splendor was all quenched in gloom. . . . Even so the glory of my Nation's past seemeth to be sinking now into a night of shame; and over that setting sun God writeth yon word of woe, Ichabod—for the glory is departed from his Israel!

"After the dread sunset came the Dark—an Egyptian blackness that could indeed be felt. Then sud-

denly from that blackness there flamed a shaft of fire, flung from above upon the trembling earth. Swift following upon that flame a Voice of anger pealed, like as though Jehovah hurled in wrath great, dreadful curses on our sinful land!

"And then for hours the Fire did follow Voice, the Voice did follow Fire; and hot rains heard I falling fast, which sounded to me like to splashing blood upon the withered grass. I seemed to hear a stern whisper in my soul which said, 'Except my people do repent and turn, even thus shall Israel be stormed upon with blood! Yet for all this his anger turneth not away, but his avenging hand is stretched out still.'

"But afterward the tempest calmed itself to rest; once more Arcturus and the Pleiades shone out; far in the east I caught the promise of the coming Dawn; then suddenly the morning star appeared, forerunner of the glorious golden sun. And as I gazed my heart grew hot within me and I heard or seemed to hear again the words that my sire had murmured to me, yea, many a time when I was still a little lad,

"'And thou, my Child, shalt be the Herald of the Dawn,
When that the Dayspring from on high shall visit us!'

"My God, what meaneth it? Where stays the Promised One for whom true Israel must wait and mourn? And doth the time indeed draw near? And who and what am I? Am I indeed the Herald of the King? Sometimes I seem to feel within my soul thy

true and valid call . . . and yet I know not where thou wouldest have me go, what do, nor how fulfill thy charge.

"But now behold, the glorious sun hath arisen and is flooding the earth with light; surely the Sun of Righteousness shall ere long arise with healing in his wings! Yea, I do feel it! I know not when, nor where, nor how it shall come to pass, but soon the true Light must shine, the darkness flee away before the Sun!

"I will now satify my simple bodily wants with locusts, wild honey, and water from the brook; and then will I betake myself again to searching the Scriptures of truth, where God reveals his will to those who truly seek."

Incident 2. Searching God's Scriptures

(*John is seen under a great spreading tree near the cavern entrance; he is seated on the mossy turf, poring over the roll of the Scriptures. He finds and reads aloud many great prophecies of the Coming One:*)

"Ah, in these sacred Scriptures I do see the promise of the Messiah sure! Of him doth Moses write in this the Law; and even the unwilling Balaam giveth glorious witness unto him. Concerning the Coming One, that chief of all the Prophets, Isaiah, doth with pen of fire write marvelously of him, picturing the very Messiah and his Messenger. In Jeremiah have I seen 'the Lord our Righteousness' foretold; and in Daniel, great prophecies of the 'Son of Man.' Yea, in all these sacred books do I discern the Promised One of God,

as clear as looking on yonder stream I see the image of the sun!"

Incident 3. Jehovah Summons His Herald

"John! John! John!"

"Who calleth me?"

"John! John! John!"

"Hearken, O my Soul! Is this the call of God?"

"JOHN! JOHN! JOHN!"

"Speak, Lord, thy servant heareth! Behold I prostrate lie in thy dread Presence. I await thy holy will."

"John, thou son of Zacharias, stand up upon thy feet and hear.

"From before thy birth I have called and chosen thee to be the Herald of my Son; thou shalt go before his face to make ready his way. I send thee to a rebellious and sinful people; thou shalt hear the word of my mouth and warn them from me. Thou shalt be to them a hammer to smite, an ax to cut down, a fire to burn and destroy. Thou shalt search the heart of sinners with the lightning of my truth; thou shalt call back my wandering people to their God. Thou shalt cry, Repent! Repent! Repent! and evermore shall thou proclaim the coming of the King. This is thy message:—Sin, and Wrath, and Woe—yet grace to all who will repent and turn! The Kingdom draweth nigh! the King is come! . . . Go forth at once and preach!"

"Thy servant, Lord—thy ready slave am I! Forthwith I go."

Episode IV: "A Voice, Crying in the Wilderness!"

Incident 1. Proclaiming the Coming King

(*Fast and far the report spreads that a great Prophet hath once again arisen in Israel; that down by the Jordan he preaches in the power of God. Crowds pour out from city and village and farm to hang breathless upon his word.*)

"O Earth, Earth, Earth, hear the word of the Lord! Woe unto thee, Israel, for thy sins! Thy whole land decayeth; all thy people lie in wickedness; all hands are soiled with sin. Ye tax-gatherers, officers of the law, ye steal and rob; ye soldiers, guardians of the peace, ye do violate the peace and commit crime; ye scribes and Pharisees, ye are of vipers' brood, and keepers of the Law have become the contemners thereof: yea, and our very high-priesthood hath passed into alien and wicked hands. Shall not God be avenged upon such a nation as this? Behold the Lord's battle-ax is gleaming on high, it is also very sharp, it will descend and smite to the heart of the Tree! Repent, repent, O Israel, lest God's wrath fall upon thee soon!"

Incident 2. "Who Art Thou, Then?"

(*A deputation from the Sanhedrim at Jerusalem speaks:*)

"Hearken, thou preacher who dost condemn the land: who art thou now? And by what authority comest thou? Who gave thee right to speak thus ill of

all, accusing priests and godly men of sin? We are from Jerusalem the holy; we are sent by those whose word is law in Israel. What sayest thou therefore of thyself? Speak!—that we may carry back report to them who sent us. Art thou perchance the Promised One of God?"

"Nay, not the Christ of God am I; not that!"

"Art thou Elijah, then, thou preacher bold?"

"Elijah am I not, indeed!"

"Art thou that Prophet, then, the world awaits?"

"I answer, No!"

"Who art thou then, and what thy mission here? And why dost thou baptize, since thou art none of these?"

"I am the Voice of one who cries. I am but a Voice; the voice is nothing, the message that it speaks is all. I, myself, am naught, but hearken ye to the message God doth speak by me, his Voice! I am the Voice of one crying in the wilderness, as saith the ancient Prophet in the Book. And my message from the Lord is this: Make ready the highway for the coming of the King! Level up every valley; level down every hill; build a broad straight road and remove every stone; that the King may come, and that all men may see the salvation of God! Repent, repent, and turn: the King is nigh!"

Episode V: The Baptism of the King

Incident 1. "Then Cometh Jesus!"

"John, son of Zacharias, messenger of the Most High, I come unto thee for baptism. I present my-

self here with all these other sons of men who seek baptism at thy hands. I am their brother; I am one with them. They come to wash away their sins; I come, as taking part with them in flesh and blood, that I may share unto the full their place and state. I would be numbered with transgressors, that sinners I may redeem. Baptize me, John."

"O Holy One, I dare not! I know not who thou art; but thine eyes are deep and pure; thy voice is gentle as the mourning dove's; upon thy face no thought of sin hath set its mark! I feel that thou art holy—yea, holier far than I. My spirit sinks abashed in the pure presence of thine own! O, Holy One, I need from thee the baptism! Thou needest none from me. I dare not, foulest sinner as I feel I am, presume to wash thee, Sinless One, from sin!"

"John, faithful servant of the Holy God, it is fitting that thou do as I have said. Not to wash away my sins (for I have none) come I to thee; but that all righteous requirements of the Law may be fulfilled. I know thy true heart, and why thou dost shrink back; but that which I require do thou fulfill. Suffer that it be so now.

"Baptize me, John."

"Yea, Lord . . . I do."

Incident 2. The Witness of John

(Jesus goes praying from the water, and at that moment a wondrous sight is seen. The heavens open; the blessed Holy Spirit in a dove-like form descends in sight of all, and rests upon the head of the Nazarene

. . . then seems to fill all his being and radiate from Him a strange and mystic light. An awe-struck silence falls upon the multitudes. Then suddenly John cries out aloud:)

"'TIS HE! 'TIS HE! THIS IS THE PROMISED ONE! GOD'S CHRIST HATH COME! For God who sent me here gave me this sign:

"'The skies shall stand ajar, the Spirit come
Down from the opened heaven and rest on One:
That One shall thus be witnessed as my King,
The Holy One of God, Mine only Son!'

"Behold, O Israel, thy Redeemer and thy Lord!"

Incident 3. The Witness of the Father

(*Swift following John's cry a great answering Voice comes from Heaven, the Infinite Father speaking to the Man:*)

"THOU ART MY SON, MY WELL-BELOVED; IN THEE IS MY DELIGHT."

XI

JOHN, THE EAGLE OF THE JORDAN

The Desert Eagle's Death

NOTATION

One of the most fascinating and valuable things in drama-preaching is the opportunity for vivid and vital Biblical interpretation. Many a Bible passage can be interpreted and made clear and living to the hearers by acting out the scene in its reality and truth. Indeed, no labored and scholarly explanation or argument can have nearly the effect upon the mind, that is made by a true to life setting forth of that Bible passage in the representation of the acts and conversation of the living characters by a living actor.

The preacher of drama sermons is constrained to think and to feel down deep into the characters and incidents he would portray, so as actually to make the Bible truth live before his hearers. And for this the Baptist's story gives special opportunity, and makes insistent demands upon the preacher's faculty of imagination and representation: if his insight be clear and comprehending he can do more to interpret this Scripture aright than could an armful of commentaries.

(HYMNS USED:

"Come, let us join our cheerful songs."
"Come, let us join our friends above."
"For all the saints who from their labors rest."

SCRIPTURE:

John 1:35-51.

RESPONSIVE READING:

Psalm 7.)

JOHN, THE EAGLE OF THE JORDAN

The Desert Eagle's Death

Episode I: "Behold the Lamb of God"

Incident 1. Giving Up Best Friends to Jesus

(*Immediately after his baptism Jesus is driven by the Spirit into the wilderness, where he endures forty days of fasting, subjected to Satan's subtle and terrible temptations. Returning victor, he walks past where John stands with two of his disciples, Andrew and a beloved youth who also bears the name of John.*)

"Look there, dearest friends of mine! Behold the Lamb of God! Yonder walketh he whom God hath sent to be the saviour of the world, God's anointed Messiah: the Sin-bearer, foretold by Spirit-filled men of old. Look on him, dear disciples of mine! Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

"Master, O John our Master! Thou hast been much, so much, to us: new light, new leading, new inspiration, new greatness in our lives . . . but, O revered and honored teacher, there is something in the seeming of yon Man of Nazareth that draws us with a power we cannot resist!

"We can never forget thee, and what thou hast done for us . . . but we pray thee for thy permission, that we may now go after him . . . yea, follow him henceforth as our Master! . . . Oh, we must go!

John, John, our great teacher, say that thou dost consent!"

"Dear followers of mine, ye know not how much I do love you! Nor can ye know how heartbreaking hard it is to see my loved disciples leave me to follow another master later come!

"Yet, dearest of friends, I dare not and I would not hold you back from HIM! When that the King cometh men must forsake the herald to follow him! He must increase, I must decrease: but my joy shall be filled to the full in seeing his divine glory enlarged. He is from above, God's own Son; I am naught. Go, my children; go after him! Only, dear ones, forget not that it was I, your friend and teacher, who led you to the Son of God, and showed him unto you! Yea, go now, and henceforth follow the Christ of God!" (A great tear falls from John the Baptist's eye, but is dashed away, as Andrew and John turn from him and run after the disappearing Nazarene.)

Incident 2. "Where Dwellest Thou?"

"Friends, what seek ye, as ye come thus hastening after me?"

"Rabbi, Master, we would speak . . . we long for a word . . . we would not transgress upon . . . Master, pray where is thine abiding place?"

"Come with me, friends, and ye yourselves shall see. The Son of Man rejoiceth to talk with them whose hearts are hungry for the truth. Let us walk together down this woodland way. . . . Here is the lowly tabernacle where abideth the Son of Man: enter in

and tarry with me, for the shadows are stretched out, the evening draweth on. Let us now go in."

"Master, our hearts are wondrously drawn to thee. We do earnestly desire to hear thy words, to know what thou dost teach; for indeed, indeed our hearts are hungry for the truth of God. All the skies are dark in Israel. Our rabbis no longer teach us truth that is alive; and save only the Baptist John, there hath not arisen a prophet in Israel lo, these many years, to bring us truth from God. But we feel that thou art true; yea, the very Truth itself! And John the Baptist hath witnessed unto thee; yea, and we have received from him consent that we turn from him unto thyself . . . to be thy disciples, if we may."

"Friends, John the Baptist is my faithful herald and forerunner: he well hath done his work, and his shall be a great reward. But better is it for men to rejoice in the light of the sun than to gaze upon the morning star which doth precede the sun. I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, nor in the dimness of the dawn. Come ye after me and I will make you children of the eternal Day. And now let us talk together of deep things of God."

Incident 3. Young Men's Confidences

"Andrew, thou art older than myself; I pray thee tell me now how thou dost think? Is not this man most wondrous of all that thou hast seen? My own heart is so on fire I scarce can tell my thoughts! This young, splendid, glorious man hath fixed his grasp

upon my very life; and all my being is enthralled by him. My mind, my spirit, and my soul, all are seized upon and held! I seem to be no more myself at all, but only something surrendered unto him. Did he ask me to die for him to-day, I truly think that I could die for him with joy!

"But, Andrew friend, how seemeth he to thee?"

"O John, thou hast thyself expressed mine inmost heart. No man like this one ever have I seen; nay, I had never dreamed of finding such an one. He is above, beyond all other men on earth; there's none like him amongst the sons of men. From this night forth I live his willing slave.

"And now, dear John, I first must find my brother Simon and tell him! I'll say that thou and I have God's Messiah found, of whom the prophets all did write. I'll bring my brother Simon to the Christ! Do thou find Philip and call him; Philip must find Nathanael and bring him. Thus shall the story spread; thus choicest men be brought to join the followers of the Nazarene, till all the true have come!"

Episode II: "In the Spirit and Power of Elijah"

Incident 1. Ahab and Jezebel Hold Converse

(*This scene occurs in Herod's gilded palace of Julias, not far from the stern, strong fortress of black Machærus, to which Herod Antipas had carried Herodias when he had stolen her from her lawful husband and his own brother, Herod Philip. Entangled by the charms and dominated by the imperious spirit of*

Herodias he had divorced his own wife, an Arabian princess; and now these two doubly guilty and doubly adulterous Idumeans, Herod Antipas and Herodias, the Ahab and the Jezebel of the New Testament, are living together in vice-regal splendor in the forest palace.)

"Herodias, fair charmer, why is thy countenance in gloom to-day? I pray thee tell, that I may chase away the cause, dear heart!"

"Thou canst chase away the cause if thou wilt chase away that man whom I do hate, the Baptist John! Why should he dwell here in our house of love, and look on thee and me with eyes of wrathful scorn? Nor is he fit companion for a princess and a prince—this rough-clad wanderer from the desert woods. Send him away, I do beseech thee, Love."

"Nay, my Herodias, nay: say not thou so. John Baptist is a holy man of God: and though he weareth hair-cloth, is not rude."

"Hair-cloth or velvet, he is full of wrath!"

"Herodias dear, his wrath is not for thee, but for our crimes. He knoweth that which we have done and disapproves; he searcheth out the sins of guilty thee and me. Besides, all people hold John for a prophet now: who knoweth what revolt he may stir up if he accuse us to the common crowd?"

"Art thou the prince and ruler, then? And dost thou fear the might of common herds? Oh, I, were I a man, would show thee how to reign as king! And as for this unmannered Baptist John, naught is it to him what thou and I have done! Is thy heart weak, to tremble at his word? I snap my finger in his ugly face!"

"Hush, hush, my dear! Behold, he cometh now; and I must speak him fair.

"Our welcome, John, thou prophet of the skies, thou holy man. Most glad are we that thou dost deign to grace our home and eat with us, commanding thus a blessing from above."

"To thy fair words I needs must answer thus: the Lord hath sent me here to speak his truth. That this is a palace meaneth naught to me who have ever dwelt beneath the open skies; nor is the food of princes more to me than locusts and wild honey; and for drink, the water murmuring o'er the stony brook. But I for thee have message from the Lord: do thou hear and heed it for thine own soul's sake.

"This princess is no lawful wife of thine! In God's pure sight she is the truly wedded wife of Philip, thine own father's son. It is not permitted unto thee to have thy brother's wife—whom thou hast falsely stolen, leaving him forlorn. Fair is she to look upon, and her mind indeed is great—but since no wife of thine is she, her sin is also great; and likewise thine! And ever must thou say within thy soul, 'God, angry, seeth all my sin!' I pray thee, Herod, hearken to God's truth: restore the wife whom thou hast stolen, to her lawful lord; take back thine own, so sinfully divorced; repent of all thy sins, and live for God!"

Incident 2. The Jealous Rage of Jezebel

(*Herodias snatches an ivory-handled stiletto from her girdle and madly springs at the prophet, as seeking*

to stab him to the heart. Herod catches her in his arms and takes the weapon from her hand.)

"O dearest Love, do not this dreadful thing! Wouldest thou slay a holy man of God, and bring the doom upon thyself and me, and all thy house and mine? Calm thyself, Love, and hearken to my words."

"Phlegon! Aye, Phlegon, thou slave of mine; haste thee and come!"

"Behold me, Lady, at thy will."

"Phlegon, strike down at once yon ruffian hair-clad fool! Kill him I say! Thy mistress gives command!"

"Hold, Phlegon! I, Herod, am the master here! Get hence at once, nor dare to touch the prophet with thy sword. Get hence, I say!"

(*Herodias flings herself in a sudden passion of weeping upon a couch; then springing again to her feet cries out to Herod:*)

"Thou lovest me no more! How canst thou say thou lovest me and dost permit yon hair-clad fool's affront to thine own wife? And since thou lovest me not I will not live! I pray thee, slay me here with thine own hand, Herod my King! Here, smite through this true heart and let me die."

"My Love, I love thee more than life!"

"Then slay for me yon man who hath insulted me, past all that womankind can bear!"

"Nay, that I dare not do; God's prophet he. But I forthwith will give command for thee, and slaves shall hurry him to dungeon deep and dark in black Machærus. There shall John the Baptist at his ease repent his witless insult to my loving bride. Come

hither, soldiers! Take this man away: shackle him in dark Machærus hold.

"Herodias, my Love, he shall trouble thee no more."

Episode III: The Witness of Jesus to John

Incident 1. A Heroic Heart's Questionings

(*John the Baptist is kept in chains in black Machærus—and the months go by. Jesus is teaching, preaching, working miracles not far away; but he works no miracle to deliver John. The caged eagle's eyes grow dim in dreadful gloom. A few of his disciples have access to him; and on a day of anguished questioning in his own soul he sends two of them to find Jesus and ask whether he be indeed the coming King or no. The disciples come to Jesus:*)

"Rabbi, Master, we are come to thee from John the Baptist, who lies in yon dread prison thou canst see, perched on high crag across the Jordan there. Lo, many months hath John in prison lain, suffering for a jealous woman's wrath. He waiteth for the manifestation of thy power. He bids us ask thee this, O Son of man: 'Art thou the Christ that cometh, or must we wait Another?' Answer, Lord."

Incident 2. Credentials of the Christ

"Disciples of my forerunner John, stand ye here an hour and watch. I have much work to do for these great gathering crowds." . . . . . .

"Master of light and power! Behold I bring thee

here my poor blind boy. For fifteen years, yea, all his life, he never yet hath looked upon my face nor seen the light. I am a widow, Lord, and this blind child my only help and stay. Master, I know that thou canst help me if thou wilt: have mercy on us, Lord, we do entreat!"

"Yea, I will. Be opened now, blind eyes, and see the light."

"O mother, mother, mother, I can see! I see thee now, and clasp thee in my arms! O mother dear, kneel with me at the feet of him, the Lord, who hath done for us greatest things and made us glad! Love, tears, and thanks to thee, thou Blessed One!"

"Now, Rabbi, Master, hear our anguished prayer! Behold our daughter on this pallet lies. She died this morning at the early dawn; and hour after hour we have struggled on, bearing her body unto thee, to cry for help. Master, have pity on our woe; speak but one word and our dead child shall live. Have mercy, O thou Christ of God, on us!"

"I am the resurrection and the life. Talithi, cumi; maid, I say Arise! . . . Behold, thy daughter liveth. Lead her home."

"Thou gracious Lord, forevermore our hearts and lives are thine! O God! O God!"

"Ah, these many suffering, sorrowing, saddened ones! How my heart yearneth over these poor lambs. Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, come! Come unto me and I will give you rest.

"And now, disciples of my herald John, go your ways back to him and tell the things that in this hour ye have both seen and heard. Deaf ears unstopped,

blind eyes are made to see; lepers are cleansed, the dead called back to life; and to the poor the Gospel hath been preached. Say unto John, These are the perfect proofs that I am He: blessed, thrice blessed be that man who stumbleth not."

"Yea, Master, we will show to John these proofs that thou indeed art Christ!"

Incident 3. The Messiah's Matchless Eulogy

"And now, O multitudes, I speak to you of John.

"What went ye out into the wilderness to see?

"A reed shaken with the wind?

"But what went ye out for to see?

"A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they that wear soft garments are in kings' houses.

"But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. For this is he of whom it is written, Behold I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. Verily I say unto you, among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist."

Episode IV: A Shameless Dance and a Shameful Oath

Incident 1. The Fallen Woman's Cunning

(*Herodias and her daughter Salome, child by her wronged husband Philip, are in secret conference. Herodias speaks:*)

"Daughter, there is somewhat I would have thee do for me; a measureless boon thy mother asks. Wilt thou now grant me what I ask, my child?"

"My mother, there is nothing I would not do for thee!"

"Thou art true child of mine!

"The thing I ask is this: to-night my husband holds high feast in honor of his birth. Many men, the noblest of the land, do gather here to do him praise. Wine will flow freely as the Jordan flood, and all make merry through a festal night.

"I will that thou, when joy is at its height, blood hot with wine, go in the drapery of a dancing girl and in that giddy, whirling, heyday game show forth thy splendid beauty to their sight. The men will loud acclaim thee, loudly praise; and then the king my husband, Antipas, will surely offer thee reward as thou mayest ask. Wilt thou then go to them, and dance for me?"

"Yea, mother, I will do as thou dost ask. 'Twill be much sport to please those gallant men. But if thy Herod offer me reward, what wilt thou that I ask of him for thee?"

"Trust that to me! When thou hast won his promise come to me, where I shall wait thy coming with tense heart: when thou dost come I'll tell thee what to ask!"

Incident 2. The Dance and the Oath

(When revelry is at its height Salome, clad in the filmy garments of a dancing girl, slips from behind the

splendid hanging curtains at the door, and with gliding, sinuous steps begins her wanton dance, bending, swaying, undulating to the rhythm of sensuous music, whirling faster and faster, in and out, round and round amongst the cheering men, until the acclaim reaches its zenith. Flushed and radiant the maiden pauses and stands still, midst thunders of applause. Herod, half-drunken, struggles to his feet and cries out in thick tones:)

"Bravo, bravo, fair maiden! That was richly done! I yield thee palm o'er every dancing girl of earth! And as thou hast pleased my noble guests so well, I will reward thee. Ask me what thou wilt; and I do swear I'll grant thee thy request, unto half of all my kingdom and my kingly power! What wilt thou? Ask and have."

"I crave thy patience but one moment, Sire; I quick return."

(Salome courtesies and runs out to Herodias:)

"Mother, mother, tell me quick: what shall I ask? He hath sworn to give me whatsoever I shall claim as my reward!"

"Ask this which I shall whisper in thine ear. (Whispers.) *Ask that!*"

"Oh-oo-oo-ooh! O Mother, mother mine, how marvelous thou art!"

Incident 3. A Maiden's Request

(*Salome runs swiftly back to the feasters, and standing breathless, lustrously beautiful, before Herod Antipas, she speaks with queenly air:*)

"I will that in fulfillment of thy promise sworn, thou give me here and now the head of John the Baptist on yon golden dish."

"Girl! Girl! Thou knowest not what thou dost ask!"

(*Herod springs to his feet, suddenly sobered; turns and strides over to the other side of the room away from his guests, and with troubled, frowning face speaks with himself:*)

"Heavens! How I have been betrayed and tricked by those two cunning women! How can I grant this fiendish girl's request? I dare not! . . . And yet . . . and yet . . . I have sworn it; and if I break my kingly oath . . . all these noble guests will sneer, and hold me for a craven . . . Nay, that I'll not endure. . . .

"Wait, girl! Thou shalt have thy wish! Here, take thy golden platter: hold it till the head be brought!

"Soldier there on guard! Go instantly to that dark dungeon thou knowest of, and bring me here the head of John the Baptist by the hair; give it to this sweet maiden, in the golden dish she holds! Stay not one instant: Go!"

Episode V: The Death of the Desert Eagle

Incident 1. "And She Brought It to Her Mother"

(*While the soldier is gone Salome stands erect, glorious in her beauty, face aflame with eager expectation—waiting! The soldier returns carrying the dripping head by the raven locks. Salome holds out the*

golden platter for the prize; she courtesies to the tetrarch, and hastens to her mother, who is poised as a tense tigress ready to spring.)

"Behold, O mother sweet, my dainty prize! Take it for thyself: I give it thee. Is it not beautiful!" (They both gaze gloatingly at the face: then suddenly Herodias snatches the stiletto from her sash and smites through the dead lips of John:) "There!—take that in thy foul mouth which dared to speak such words to him and me! (Then in sudden revulsion:) Salome, summon a servant instantly! . . . Faugh! . . . take this horrid ugly thing away!"

Incident 2. "And They Went and Told Jesus"

"O Blessed Christ, thou Chosen One of God, our master John is dead! The cruel tyrant hath taken away his head, for that John dared to speak the very truth of God. . . . Rabbi, John did love and honor thee, and ever bore thee witness as God's Christ. And now to whom shall we, John's orphaned children, go but unto thee? Thou hast the words of life and perfect truth. Our hearts are full of woe because of John: O Rabbi Jesus, speak to us of him."

"Beloved, I did love and honor John indeed: greater soul than he hath never lived on earth. As he was faithful unto martyr's death, to him shall be the martyr's great reward. Yea, friends, I know that he shall ever wear a crown under the eyes of God.

"And ye, his loved disciples, who did follow the Old Covenant prophet John—I do gather you into my arms and speak this ancient benediction to your souls:

'The Lord bless thee and keep thee;
The Lord make his face shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee;
The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee and give thee peace! AMEN."

XII

THREE DIVINE DAYS

A Trilogy

NOTATION

Throughout the Church in late years there has been an increasing interest in the observance of special days, and an increasing number of special days to be observed.

The drama method of preaching will furnish a peculiarly fitting and effective form for sermons on such occasions, whether Mother's Day, Children's Day, Old Folks' Day, Memorial Sunday, Armistice Sunday, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year, Washington's or Lincoln's Birthday, or any other. So manifest is this that the author of the present book plans to publish in the not distant future a volume of Drama Sermons intended specifically for such special days and their observance.

The three sermons which compose the following Trilogy, entitled, Three Divine Days, partake somewhat of this nature. The first one, A Day in Eden, would be appropriate to some particular occasion, such as a vesper service at a summer camp, summer hotel veranda service, or at any sunset worship of young people.

The second of the Trilogy, A Day in Bethlehem, is fitted for a Christmas time service; and the third, A Day in Old Jerusalem, is intended as an Easter evening observance.

In all three of these the spiritual imagination, or faculty of vision, has been given reverential freedom of action; especially in the vision of Heaven Bereft by the disappearance of Christ, and in the Dream of Nicodemus, in the tomb of Jesus on Easter evening.

THREE DIVINE DAYS

A Trilogy

I: A DAY IN EDEN: WONDER, WORK AND WORSHIP

I: Wonder: A Divine Endowment

(*Adam and Eve in a Wonder World:*)

"Again the day is dawning, dearest wife, and we shall see once more that marvel of the Sun. Let us go forth to stand upon the open hill, and behold that Light leap up from Night, and flood our Eden with its wondrous glow. Each morn its coming seemeth more marvelous, each night with more amazing glory sinks it down. Come, love, swift must we go!"

"Again it cometh, husband dear! My bosom throbs with wonderment and joy. But tell me, Adam, what that great Sun may be: much have I pondered but no answer can I find."

"Nor can I tell thee, Eve. Yet have I dreamed an answer in my heart. 'Tis this: May this not be some mighty angel of the Father God, an angel shining with a face so bright our human eyes may scarcely gaze upon his countenance?"

"Yet, love, why should an angel thus with daily flight pass over thee and me?"

"To bless and give us light for life and work; for otherwise it were for us an endless Dark."

"Then if it be to give us light for daily life, whence

cometh that great light he poureth still on us, and on all living things? The Father God alone createth light, and Himself is Light, thou hast said before."

"This is answer from my dream. Is it not that though the face of the FATHER GOD be hid from us, this great angel looketh full into the face of God, and shineth thus with glory; throwing back to us God's light, even as the waters in yon lake throw back the Sun? The angel ever looketh on the face of God; we look a moment on the angel's face, and thus God's light doth shine on us, though not the Father God Himself."

"Thinkest thou, dear husband, we shall ever look upon the very face of God?"

"Nay, I dare not ponder on that solemn thought! . . . But, Eve, both day and night, both noontide and the dawn, are filled with marvels wondrous to behold. What are all these things? Whence came they? What are we ourselves? The Father God hath made us—out of what? Why are we here? Shall we remain here ever, evermore; or shall some surprising change sweep over us? All night betimes I ponder on that thought."

"O Adam, husband dear, I shall still be satisfied so only I remain with thee; and surely the Father God who made us, put us here in all this beauty, light and love, will still keep us, do us good. Yet do I myself wonder all the day; for flowers, and trees, and birds, and singing brooks, are all so beauteous and so wonderful I scarce can keep from tears."

"Yet, Eve, more wonderful than waters, trees and

birds are we ourselves. Our hands that hold, our feet that walk and run, our eyes that see these marvels of the sky, our ears that hear these sounds, our mouths that speak and sing—are not we ourselves most wonderful?"

"Are we more wonderful, my husband, than the sky when it flasheth purple light at dawn, and the great angel's face is peeping o'er the hills to look on thee and me? How glorious the sight, yon rising Sun!"

"Glorious indeed, my Eve, and wonderful; but is it not more wonderful that thou and I do see it, think upon it, ask from whence it came? We think, we ask, we wonder, and we love: surely within ourselves is that which is the Wonder of it all! . . . Nay, nay, I err: for He who made the marvel is more marvelous than His work. The Father God who made us, who made this sun, the moon, the stars, He must indeed be Wonder more wonderful than all! What must God be like?"

"Oh, husband mine, I cannot follow thee in these high flights of thought; let me sit here and wonder at this dewdrop on the grass."

II: Work: A Benign Benediction

(*Adam and Eve converse and work:*)

"Come now, my Eve, thou and I have work to do. This Eden garden is ours to dress and keep. Seeds are to sow; soil to stir about the rose trees' roots; plants that bear us food, to cultivate. Moreover, woodland ways are to be cleared of fallen limbs, and water

courses must be opened to our growing plants. The greater work is mine, but thou my helpmeet canst train the clambering vines, guide the rose trees' branches into beauteous form, and gather fruits and berries for our midday feast."

"My husband, canst tell me why 'tis needful that we work? The birds toil not, and yet all have their food. The fur-clad creatures nor plant nor lead water to their growing crops, yet hunger not for lack of food. Why should not our garden bear fruitage of itself? Doth God love birds and furry creatures more than us?"

"Nay, helpmeet, nay: God loveth us, his children, most of all, and therefore giveth us our work to do, that we may use our powers and grow thereby."

"But is not the heavy work too hard for thee?"

"No, no, my love; the work I do is joy. 'Tis good to work. The hands grow stronger, feet more firm; I draw my breath more deeply, feel a deeper life; the food thou dost prepare tastes doubly sweet, when I have spent the hours in work. Then when evening cometh sleep cometh as a welcome guest, and tarrieth with me all the gracious night. Yea, because I am a man I joy to work. By work I win worthily life's daily bread. By work I cultivate the earth, help God to make earth fruitful, fair and fine. To dress and keep this garden is delight, not toil I would escape."

"My husband, do God's angels also work?"

"They rest not day nor night from serving him. Like them we serve; but our place of service is this garden of the Lord. Here let us work with gladness, serve with joy; employing happy hours and busy

hands, seeing in work the benediction of our Father God."

III: Worship: A God-Given Glory

(*Adam and Eve murmur in awed tones:*)

"The hours of work are ended, love; the evening draweth on."

"But look, my Eve, upon the glories of yon sky where sinketh the Sun behind the wall of hills. Rich, radiant, palpitating light springeth upward from the setting Sun, and spreadeth in ever-changing beauty over golden clouds. It floodeth heaven and earth with glory: perchance the angel going, flingeth back to us the evening benediction of our Father God. Beneath these God-revealing skies let us now worship him."

"How shall we worship, husband, him we see not?"

"He seeth us, and heareth all we say. And though we see him not, hast thou not heard his Voice?"

"Yea, husband, I have heard. At early morn I stood beside the rose-tree, heavy with dewy bloom, and from amongst the bending blossoms came a low, sweet, wondrous Voice that spake. I knew it for his voice, which thrilled my heart. Mid-afternoon I heard him whisper from the depths of purple clouds hanging low and golden there above my head. Not even to thee, my husband, can I whisper those mystic messages; but all my soul is filled with love and awe."

"Beloved, that is worship—yea, though thou hast seen him not."

"Husband, may we hear his voice in other ways, and hearing, worship worthily our unseen God?"

"Yea, loved one, the Voice speaketh to the hearing heart in many ways. At times he calleth in the falling rain; at times he speaketh in the whispering breeze; again, from leaping waters of the cataract he crieth, and yet again a still small voice doth speak from lisping leaves and nodding violets. And always they who hear the Voice, and hearing, bow their hearts in love and awe, they do truly worship the great Father God!

"Yet is it most fitting, helpmeet of my soul, that thus at evening hour, when all the sky and earth are full of God, thou and I do stand together 'neath these sacred skies, hand clasped in hand, heart close to heart, happy faces lifted heavenward, and that standing thus in worship we sing our twilight song of adoration and of praise!"

(*Both sing:*)

"Father God whom we adore,
Whom we love and worship all the day—
Now we praise and thank thee more,
Now we sing and love and pray—
Loving, praising more and more
Every day."

II. A DAY IN BETHLEHEM: ANGELS, BABE AND MOTHER: CHRISTMAS REVERIE

1. Angels: Shepherds Gone Ajar

(Plains of Bethlehem. Midnight. The marvelous Lyrean sky, magic with music of silvery light, below, the fields of earth lie dark and dim. Three shepherds, Manuel, Knud, Ismael, stand together, waiting to guard sheep as they watch the sky. Knud speaks.)

"Far in the east there shineth like a golden glow like as the light that doth precede the sun, yet dare it cannot be some midnight hath far passed. Nor is it the coming of the morning star, for broader this, more golden, and more bright. Manuel, have ye been keep upon these plains, in many years, have ye beheld the like at other time?"

(M.) "Nay, such I have not seen. And not alone that eastern shining attracts us, but all the night and sky are mystical—an unusual something in the whispering breeze, a subtle something in the very air. All nature seemeth conscious and aware, as though amazing wonders awed by mystery."

(K.) "See how yonder wedge of brighter gold doth push aside both walls of night, opening a pathway at its blazing feet. The gates of God's bright heaven do stand ajar, and somewhat of the glory wealth through."

(M.) "Swiftly that light increaseth. Perchance a falling star cometh from the firmament far above."

(R.) "God of our fathers, 'tis a shining seraph's wing: he sweepeth downward in swift flight; he draweth nigh! He beareth a flaming sword aloft."

(S.) "Nay, 'tis not a sword; rather a spear of golden light he beareth, sweeping downward to our very face. The God of Abraham protect us now!"

"All hail, O Shepherds! Fear not, ye who watch all night until the morn, even as star-eyed seers have watched through man's long night of woe, awaiting God's own promised Light. Behold I bring to you a message of great joy; a message glad, for all the sons of men. For unto you this night is born in David's Bethlehem a Saviour king, who is even the anointed Christ of God. A little helpless babe doth lie, all wrapped in swaddling clothes and pillowed in a manger of the kine: thus shall ye know the Christ and Lord. Come hither, angel Choristers, and chant his praise! Flash out to human sight, sing human words with me:—

"To God on high be glory:
And over all the earth
Where shall sound Messiah's story,
Sweet story of his birth,
Let love divine and brotherhood
Bless earth beyond all other good.
God is well pleased with men to dwell,
Jehovah God, Immanuel.
Amen! Amen! Amen! Amen!"

(M.) "How wondrous are these sights; how heavenly this music angels sing! All my soul is ravished

with their melody: a song more sweet than singing birds, or silvery waterfalls, or holy choirs that chant great chorals in the Temple on high days."

(S.) "Now have the angels gone, O brothers; the glory of their brightness dieth in yon cleft eastern sky. Let us arise and go with haste to Bethlehem, and see this wondrous thing God's angels have made known to us."

II: Babe and Mother: Heaven's Mystery

(*The three shepherds draw nigh to Bethlehem:*)

(R.) "How shall we find this wondrous Child the angel told us of?"

(M.) "'Wrapped in swaddling clothes,' he said, 'and lying in a manger.' What manger, if not at the over-crowded inn? There shall we find the Babe, according to the angel's word."

(R.) "Hark, as we draw near I do hear the murmurs of a woman's voice, singing a low, sweet lullaby!"

> "Rest thee, Baby, Child divine;
> Though from heaven, thou art mine.
> Mother's love and God's own keeping
> Guard thee safe whiles thou art sleeping."

(M.) "Mother of the Lord's Anointed, this night we three shepherds of lowly lineage and birth, abiding in the fields keeping our flocks, have seen a wondrous vision of angels, who proclaimed to us the birth of Christ the Saviour Lord, and sent us hither to seek

that Child divine. Wherefore, obedient unto the heavenly vision we are come."

"Yea, behold, O shepherds, this my Gift-divine: count me, his mother, most blessed of womankind that He is mine. Look on the Holy Babe."

(*All three:*) "We do fall down and worship him, anointed King!"

III: Heaven Bereft: A Christmas Evening Reverie

PART ONE

(*Hear the dream which I have dreamed, the vision strange my soul imagined, of that first Christmas, when night had fallen again upon the earth. Methought two bright angels held converse just without the gates of gold; one was named Ariel, one Ithuriel. Ithuriel was speaking:*)

"What hath befallen, O shining Ariel? Why doth the golden city of our God lie in gloom? Returning from divine mission to the outmost planet of the starry spheres I could discern no more that glory of light which evermore is wont to flame from all the battlements of Heaven: the vast turrets of pure gold shine dim; the very lilies by Life's river seem to droop; and even the leaves of the amaranthine Tree of Life hang dull and listless from their branches dry. What hath happened to dull the glory, chill the bliss of Paradise?"

"And hast thou not known, O Ithuriel? I thought the story of Heaven's loss had surely reached ere this the utmost bounds of empty space and caused amaze."

"But what is it that hath chanced, O Ariel? Hath one of our archangels fallen to join Satan's host?"

"Nay, not so; but worse."

"Hath the chiefest saint from earth, Abraham the Friend of God, been cast out from Paradise because of unforgiven sin?"

"Nay, Ithuriel; not as thou askest, but much worse."

"O tell me, tell me quickly, Ariel. My heart grows sick with dread. Yet can I not dream what worse thing could hap than that mighty Gabriel should revolt to hell, or a great saint redeemed be flung forth to fall from heaven back to sin. What could be worse than that, O Ariel?"

"This! Yea, this, O Ithuriel! The Light of Heaven extinguished, the Glory of Heaven quenched, the Joy of Heaven banished, Heaven sore bereaved—for that the Son of God is gone from Paradise."

"Gone? Gone? The Son of God is gone? Ariel, Ariel, thou declarest the infinitely impossible! The Son who created all and filleth all, where could he disappear, be lost or hide? The very thought is one we have no power to think. Thou speakest utter nonsense, Ariel—things that could not, could not be. And could this be, Heaven could not bear the loss."

"Yet is it so, thou unbeliever; it is true indeed. The Eternal Son is gone, nor doth his glory shine now anywhere in all the universe. What hath extinguished that Perfect Light none doth know; but Heaven lieth sore bereft, emptied of joy, its glory rapt away. Saints are no more happy, angels sing no more; and were weeping possible in the heavenly City of our God, angels would sit weeping by the alabaster walls, saints

from the earth go wailing through the golden streets. Alas! Alas! Alas!"

PART TWO

Joy! Joy! Joy! Joy! Joy! . . . "Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!"

"O Ariel, hearest thou how the bells of Heaven peal out, ring out, fling out joy? Hearest thou how all saints and angels are singing Alleluia? Why is it that all do ring and sing, I pray thee tell?"

"Nay, I know not; but surely 'tis a joyous sound. But behold where cometh a hastening cherub who perchance can tell. Ask of him, Ithuriel."

"List, thou swift-winging cherub; pause but one moment in thy flight! Canst tell us wherefore this great sound and song of joy, through all the City that lay so late in unaccustomed gloom?"

"Yea, angel messengers, that can I! Great Gabriel our archangel, with a choral band, hath but now returned from far-off Earth, and brought back blessed news of the glorious Son of God. Joy, O perfect joy! Behold, even now cometh Gabriel this way and ye may ask of him the marvelous great story of the absent King."

"Hail, Ariel and Ithuriel, faithful messengers of God most high. Why stand ye so amazed?"

"Because indeed of strange things we have heard. First, an incomprehensible report that Heaven had been bereft of its chief joy and crown, the Son of God: then swift following cometh the word that thou,

from far-off little Earth, bringest glad tidings of our unseen Lord. We pray thee, Gabriel, explain to us this mystery stupendous, whose like hath Heaven never known."

"Stupendous mystery, in truth; unknown and unimagined hitherto. Nor am I able to explain or comprehend; yet this much I know and tell to you as best I may, the marvelous things that mine own eyes have seen.

"This very day, in Bethlehem of Judea on the Earth, hath the Son of God been of a woman born, becoming thus a little human Babe. Me the ALL-HOLY sent, with choir of singing seraphs, down to Earth to herald unto lowly shepherd men the tidings wonderful, and sing a glorious anthem for all the sons of men."

"And yet, O Gabriel, not less but more is our amaze, when thou hast told! Infinitely impossible that the Son of God vanish from the skies—this seemeth yet more impossible, that he, the very God of God, be born a human Babe on Earth, emptied of all his glory infinite. How may it come to pass, O Gabriel?"

"Ask me not, Ariel! It is far beyond my thought. Angels and archangels all do marvel much, but cannot comprehend. Cherubim do seek to see that mystery, yet find it not. God's secret thought no seraph can search out.

"This only do I know: for love of sinful man hath God thus done, giving his only begotten Son, that somehow (this the deepest mystery of all!) man may be saved from sin and death. That accomplished, then their Saviour, our own King and Lord, back from

Earth shall in triumph lead a mighty host of men redeemed—souls that shall fill all Heaven with human praise.

"And ever that the King arriveth at the Gates, then shall ye and I, and all the thronging hosts of God leap up and stand on Heaven's highest battlements to welcome with unmeasured adoration back to bliss and to eternal glory our Majestic and Triumphant King, the sole-begotten Son of God.

"And then shall ring out through all the Universe that one great cry,

"ALLELUIA, FOR THE LORD GOD OMNIPOTENT DOTH REIGN! AMEN! AMEN!"

(*And this methought I heard, on that first Christmas night, after that Christ was born in Bethlehem.*)

THREE DIVINE DAYS (Continued)

III: A DAY IN OLD JERUSALEM: DAWN: TWILIGHT: EVENTIDE

I: Dawn in the Garden

(*Mary Magdalene, Salome, Joanna and other women bearing spicery, come seeking the sepulchre of Jesus. Salome speaks:*)

"Ah, chill and damp the dawn out in the garden here. My tresses are wet with dew, my hands and feet are cold. Magdalene, canst thou find the pathway to the sepulchre in this dim light?"

"Yea, in pitchy darkness, and were I asleep! Here we turn down this by-path; now across this deep ravine, and up to where the hillside faces to the east. Beyond that largest olive tree shall we find the stone-blocked entrance to the tomb—and him! Oh, let us haste."

"But who shall roll aside for us that heavy stone?"

"Fear not, Joanna, God will open us the way, that we may enter and anoint our Lord. Yea, even now, see, the stone is rolled away. Let us go softly in—Alas, he is not here! They have taken away my Lord."

"What hath happened, Mary Magdalene? Perchance the gardener hath borne him hence. What thinkest thou, Joanna?"

"Oh, I know not, cannot comprehend. But what do we now?"

"Tarry ye here and watch, while I with swift feet will run into the city and bring word to Simon Peter and apostles all, that they may come and search."

(*Mary runs swiftly towards Jerusalem.*)

"Alas, Salome, the tomb stands empty and the Lord is gone. Yet let us enter in again and look; perchance we shall find some sign— Oh, see! Who and what are yonder white-robed ones that stand within?"

"Women, fear ye not: we are God's watchers, but not to guard the Dead. Why seek ye him who liveth, in these abodes of death? Risen and living is he, as he said. But go ye, tell his disciples, yea, and Peter too, the Lord, the crucified, hath risen again. Run with all speed."

(*The women depart in haste. Soon after Peter and John come running to the tomb. Peter enters, followed by John:*)

"Woe is me, John, our Master whom I did deny hath been taken hence. Here lie the linen cloths and napkin white with which the Lord was wound; the clothing here, the napkin yonder further off. Why is it thus?"

"O Peter, might it be that he himself did fold and place that napkin there, the clothing here? If that . . . O Peter, thinkest thou that it might be?"

"Nay, John, 'tis but an empty dream, vain hope. But naught is there here that we may do; let us return homeward, thou and I."

(*Mary Magdalene returns:*)

"Let me look again where my Lord was laid! Yet

mine eyes so flow with tears I scarce can see . . . but who and what are these? Two white-robed shining ones, seated at the head and feet where Jesus lay."

"Why weepest thou, woman, on a morning of great joy?"

"Mock not my sorrow: I have cause to weep! They have taken away the body of my Lord and where laid him I nor know nor guess. Let me go hence and search. . . ."

"Woman, weepest thou? And why? Hast thou not cause for joy?"

"Sir, if thou the gardener hast borne him hence show me the place and I will carry him away."

"Mary!"

"RABBONI! MY MASTER!"

"Touch not my transfigured form, daughter beloved; but, having seen me risen from the dead, go thou and tell my disciples that which thou hast seen. Yea, quickly go."

II: The Guest at Twilight

(*Road to Emmaus; Cleopas and another. Afterwards, the upper room at Jerusalem, the disciples gathered.*)

"Sad is this day, O friend, beyond all sorrow of our former years. Dead is our Master—dead: his body stolen from the tomb. 'Tis strange, and passing sad."

"Yet what of the women's tale of visions, opened sepulchre, and the Lord alive? What must we think of this?"

"What can we think, O friend? Alas, how easy the women should see a fancied vision, erring thus! The dead return not when heart is pierced with spear, hands and feet with nails. In all the world no victim from the cruel Roman cross hath come alive: Rome maketh that full sure."

"Who is yon traveler, Cleopas, doth draw nigh to walk with us?"

"A stranger to my eyes; I know him not."

"Greetings, good friends and brethren. Walk ye far?"

"But to the fair village of Emmaus. Good neighbor, will thou walk with us?"

"Yea, gladly will I companion with you on the road. But tell me why ye look so sad, journeying thus together with dejected speech?"

"A stranger art thou in Jerusalem, knowing nothing of the things so lately come to pass?"

"What things, I pray you tell?"

"The woeful things concerning the Nazarene. A mighty prophet of the Lord was he, yet our priests and rulers hated him, constrained Pilate the governor that him he crucified, sealing his body in the sepulchre three days agone. But, behold, this early morn that sepulchre is empty, the dead body gone. Moreover, certain women of our company do earnestly protest that in the dim and misty dawn they saw two shining angels who affirmed the Christ to be alive. Marvelous the story and most impossible!"

"O foolish ones: how slow of heart are ye! Have ye not read the scriptures? Moses foretold Messiah; David prophesied that his body should not rest in

death, nor see corruption; Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Malachi, all spake of him. Had ye wisely searched these scriptures of all truth ye had known that it behoved the Christ to suffer, rise and reign. So taught all the prophets, of the Coming One.

"But behold Emmaus. Fare ye well, my path lieth still before."

"Good stranger, enter and abide with us. The shadows lengthen, the day far spent. Tarry with us through the night."

"Gracious your hospitality; I will do according to your word."

"Now, friend, as we sit at meat wilt thou consecrate our food in prayer to the Father who doth give us all?"

"Yea, do we thank thee, Father, for this bread, emblem of that bread of God from heaven. I am that bread of life: take, eat, this is my body, broken for you, O friends."

"O Master, Master, it is thou thyself!"

"Cleopas, it was truly He. Did not our hearts within us burn, walking and talking by the way?"

"Yea, friend, my heart is leaping yet with joy. But let us back to Jerusalem, to tell the Church . . ."

(*They return with haste to the gathered disciples.*)

"It is all true! The Lord is risen indeed: yea, he hath risen."

"Well, hearken, beloved, while we two tell of how, on the Emmaus road and at the evening meal, he talked with us and showed us wondrous things. Thus did he as we tell . . ."

"All hail, my children dear. My peace be unto you. But what? Are ye filled with fear? Know ye not

that this is I myself? Behold my hands and feet and pierced side; believe these many proofs that I am flesh and blood, the friend that ye have known and loved."

"Indeed, indeed, it is our very master Jesus, alive and risen from the dead! O Master, we adore."

"Children, quickly I ascend unto our Father God, but ye shall be my witnesses upon the earth. Even as the Father sent me, so send I you. Build up my Church, spread God's kingdom wide, conquer the nations by the message of my cross, and lo, I am with you all the days. The Comforter shall be your strength and guide; empowered by him go forth to all the earth and tell the story of the Crucified.

"Now with divine, inspiring breath I breathe on you: receive ye, all, the Holy Ghost for light and power. Amen."

III: Easter Visions of a Prophet Soul

(*Late afternoon: the sepulchre in the garden: Nicodemus, the rich counselor who at the first had gone to Jesus by night, is standing near the entrance, speaking with himself:*)

"Here Joseph of Arimathea and I myself carried his sacred body we had wrapped in myrrh and aloes; within this rock-hewn sepulchre we laid him but three days agone. And now behold the tomb is empty! And I, my soul is rent asunder 'twixt sorrow and 'twixt joy. Hath the Nazarene risen from the dead indeed; or, as the counselors declare, have the disciples stolen him away? . . . The disciples? Am I not myself a disciple, a believer in the Christ? Alas, long did I

doubt and hesitate, craven that I was; but the kingly majesty of his dying drew all my heart to him. He is the Son of God indeed, the anointed one of Israel. Oh, that I had confessed him while he was still alive! Yet is he not indeed alive again, as Mary witnesseth? Would God I might see and be assured. I would swear my spirit, love and life to him, my King divine!

"Alone am I in the quiet garden, by the empty tomb! Jesus, Master, whom my heart adoreth as my God, might I dare to enter thy forsaken sepulchre, lie on the spot where thy pierced form was laid, and there commune with my own soul of thee?"

(*Nicodemus softly enters the sepulchre, reverently and with voiceless awe lies down just where he and Joseph of Arimathea had laid the dead body of Jesus. Lying there in deep thought and prayer a wondrous exaltation comes upon his spirit, and he falls into trance or slumber, in which he dreams, or sees visions wonderful.*)

A VISION OF SHEOL IN PANIC

All Sheol lieth in trepidation and dismay; Hades in amaze. The Son of God, whose death the Fiend had wrought, hath risen from the tomb triumphant over death. Hell's vaunted victory but short-lived, demons are confounded, black spirits in despair. Satan and all his hosts, defeated in confusion for the nonce, speak each to each in gloomy counsel of despond.

Yet soon the archfiend summoneth resolution new, and to dejected followers crieth loud: "All is not lost, my faithful friends! Brave and persistent, we yet may

win the war. Still with fierce hate will we antagonize the Christ, fight against his Church, rob him of multitudes of souls by craft and cunning, force and fraud. All weapons are lawful in the hands of hell, all war is ours. We are immortal spirits; can fight forevermore. Fight on, fight on forever and for aye!"

A VISION OF EMBATTLED HOSTS

Now the tranced sleeper in the sepulchre seeth new visions reaching out through many lands, down ages long of human history. Vast armies are seen ranged in mortal strife, though all invisible to human eyes. Satan sweepeth black squadrons through the skies, marshaling mighty forces to the war. Opposed to these, bright armies of the Truth, captained by One whose face is like the sun, his raiment all of snowy white, his arms a leaping fiery sword of truth, his banner red as blood; and he is seated on a war-horse white as snow.

Fierce is the conflict to the dreamer's eye, nor can he guess for long which host doth win. Some of the White Captain's warriors fall, some fail; some basely betray their Captain and the Cause: yet of the white-robed warriors the most do fight both true and well.

Slowly the black batallions are forced back and back, though here and yonder making head against the hosts of white. Slowly the blood-red banner leadeth on to victory. Wherever the White Captain's armies have the mastery, there all the land springeth up with blooming roses and with lilies fair; wheresoever the forces of Blackness make advance, there destruction, death and

darkness come, and all the land behind their march is as if smitten by earthquake, fire and hurricane.

(*Thus Nicodemus lieth dreaming, and deeply prayeth triumph for the White Captain's hosts.*)

A VISION OF ETERNAL VICTORY

The dreamer seeth now a scene sublime. Innumerable multitudes, clad all in white, go thronging up the steeps of Day, singing songs of triumph over Death. Husbands and wives by cruel Death divided have each the other found; mothers clasp to loving bosoms children dear that Death hath snatched away; families reunited march together with sweet songs: and all go swiftly upward to the eternal House of Life, led on by the great White Captain of the fight.

Then doth the sleeper hear those blest words of Holy Writ:

> "Then shall the ransomed of the Lord return
> And come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy
> upon their heads;
> They shall obtain joy and gladness, yea,
> Sorrow and sighing shall forever flee away."

And the entranced dreamer asketh one, "Who is it, yon glorious Captain that hath won this victory over Death and Hell, and leadeth now his rejoicing multitudes up the sun-crowned heights of God? Who is he, I pray thee tell?"

And the answer cometh clear:

"WHO BUT JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE CRUCIFIED?"

XIII

A MAN'S DEBATE WITH HIS SOUL

(*"I will say to my soul, Soul!"*)

NOTATION

A brother minister urged that a distinctively evangelistic sermon be included in this volume. Testimony had come from evangelistic workers in rescue missions that some of the drama sermons published in *The Expositor* had "opened a new world" to the preacher and had proved most effective amongst the "down-and-outs." It was desired to test whether this drama method would prove valuable as an aid to evangelistic preaching in ordinary church work.

The present sermon is clearly not for the "down-and-out," but for the man who feels that he is "rich and increased in goods, and has need of nothing"—a much harder proposition, by the way, for the preacher! But without comment on this sermon, this remark may be permitted: the drama sermon seems to the author to have very remarkable adaptation for effective evangelistic preaching and great possibilities in that line.

A MAN'S DEBATE WITH HIS SOUL

(*"I will say to my soul, Soul!"*)

Episode I: The Cry of a Hungry Soul

"Soul! thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, be merry."

"But, Man, abundance of things possessed can not make happy any soul; and I indeed am not happy, though thou be so."

"Not happy, Soul? Why art thou not happy? What aileth thee?"

"Because I'm hungry, Man."

"Hungry, my Soul? Why, here are stores and stores of provender I have for thee: eat and drink thy fill!"

"These things, O Man, are not food for me. Hungry and thirsty am I for my own."

"Well, do thou this which I command thee, Soul: eat and drink rich food and wine I offer, rest and sleep in the downy bed prepared for thee, and thou shalt soon be happy and content. I know what is truly for thy good; and besides, I am thy master, Soul."

"Yea, Man, thou art the master over me, and canst impose on me thy will. Thou canst refuse the food I hunger for, and force me to eat thine earthly provender: yet that cannot satisfy my hunger. I must starve."

"What nonsense, Soul! Only once get accustomed to this provender and thou wilt like it, eat it eagerly, grow sleek and fat. Why not?"

"Why not? Because I was not made to feed on fleshly fare. O Man, I have been hungry all the days that I have lived with thee; yet thou hearest not my sighing, givest me nor food nor drink. And though thy great new barns be filled to overflow with all thy goods, still I, thy Soul, am hungry, thirsty, lean and thin."

"Well, thou dost surely want for sense and sanity. All men everywhere do eat this fare I offer thee, seek for it eagerly, and call it good. Why canst thou not eat that which others do, and be content? And have I starved thee? Nay, the word is false. With all earthly good I have heaped thy dish, and fed thee always on the best the field affords. Most ungrateful art thou, giving me no thanks."

"O Man, thou dost not understand thy Soul, neither aright interpret thy Soul's deep longings, voiceless cries."

"Yea, thou dost ever cry! I'll endure it not! Hush thou thy wailing, Soul, and give me rest."

"Yet, Man, thy little babe doth cry when hungry; thou canst not still its cries by threatening words; and if thou do beat the babe, it will but cry the more. I am thy Soul, as if thy helpless babe: may I not cry when hungry, wretched, cold?"

"Thou art my Soul; but mine to do my will, obey my word, and hold thy tongue the while!"

EPISODE II: THE SOUL'S REVOLT AGAINST EMPTY LIFE

(*"I will say to my soul—"*)

"SOUL! Come hither from thy mooning in the skies, and serve thy master. I have employment for my Soul to-day."

"What wilt thou of thy Soul, O Man?"

"I must be amused. Time hangeth heavy, now that I am rich. Bring bowl and bubble-pipe, and blow me shining spheres of empty nothingness, that I may laugh to see them sail and sway awhile, then in a moment burst.

"When I have tired of that, thou and I will play at tiddle-de-winks, and while away an hour. And after that, I will look to thee to find me other little sports to keep me pleased. Thus shall my day pass by, and at the evening I will give thee thy reward."

"Master, it is now the evening hour, and I have served thy humor all the day, as thy caprice required. What now is my reward?"

"A double portion of rich provender; a more luxurious couch for thy slumbers sweet to-night. Take thine ease, eat, drink, be merry, O my Soul."

"Thou purblind Man, how canst thou mock me thus? Emptier is thy reward than shining bubbles blown for thee to-day; yet for it I have frittered one whole day of life, a day that might have been majestic . . . . How piteous trivial such a life to live, since the Soul aspireth after things divine! Nor can I cease such

dreamings day or night, for that the Unseen ever beckoneth."

"Thou silly, moonstruck Soul, forget thy foolish frenzies; get thee to bed and sleep. Thy more luxurious couch will surely bring thee slumber; the morrow, find thee calm and satisfied."

"Alas, O Man, how should thy Soul be calm and satisfied, constrained to trivial employ and serving shallowest purposes? And as for slumber, I feel that I shall never sleep again, so torn with thoughts am I."

"Then will I give to thee a pleasant sleeping potion; drink, Soul, and thou shalt sleep in soft forgetfulness, wake the morrow in a glad and joyous mood, thy troubles all forgot."

Episode III: The Soul's Dream of Treasures Forfeited

"Oh! Oh . . . Oh, me! . . . Alas, alas, alas!"

"What aileth thee, my Soul, that thou dost cry out, bewail and weep? Thou didst promise to slumber peacefully, then awake in joyous mood and gay. Why dost thou now complain?"

"Oh, cruel master, Man, thy sleeping potion had a subtle poison, a poison that did fill my dreams with woe. The sleep-bringing opiate but brought me dread visionings of treasures lost, of jewels forfeited, and me myself left penniless and poor."

"Nay, Soul, thou seest fantasies. Thou art not poor, but rich, for thou hast much goods laid up for many years. Think of these thy riches, and rejoice."

"Man, Man: thou hast not seen my dreams, my woeful dreams!"

"But what hast thou dreamed so dreadful? Tell me, Soul."

"I know not surely what I dreamed; yet did I see slipping from my hands all sweet and beauteous things that I had ever held or hoped. Then meseemed the Glory of the Might-Have-Been passed far beyond my reach, all high Ideals became impossible for me for evermore. Whereat dark Despair came over me, formless agony clutched with spectral fingers at my heart. O Man, my dream was terrible, and terror grips me still!"

"Come, Soul, thou art beside thyself, mocked by foolish, childish fancies in a dream. If thou have fear, 'tis emptier than the crying babe's. Thou art safe with me. Of what art thou afraid?"

"I fear the great Beyond, that mystic Invisible no flesh hath seen. A nameless dread doth fill me, Man! Much goods laid up for many years, hast thou said? Yet who knoweth if the many years themselves shall last? If years should fail, what would chance us then?"

"Bah, bah! Think not upon such empty questionings. The years keep on their course; our stores of goods are safe; all shall be well with thee and me. Arise and eat, drink of this wine that I have mixed, come to the revel with my guests, and share our joy."

"No joy is there for me, O cruel Man."

"Why call me cruel? I have used thee well, supplying raiment, food and drink in rich array, and marble mansion for thy dwelling place."

"Yet hast thou been cruel to thy Soul, O Man. By the power of fleshly will hast thou tyrannized and crushed me down. I longing to fly sunward, thou hast chained me to the clodded earth. I hungering for fitting food of Souls, thou hast forced me to devour the husks that swine do eat. Man, thou hast wronged thy Soul with cruel wrong."

"Thou liest, Soul! No husband could use wife better than I, thee; yet as a fretful, weak, contentious woman dost thou evermore complain, so destroying all my peace and heart's content. . . . Yet perchance I have in some things failed? Henceforth I'll use thee better, Soul; I do promise it in truth. I will amend, some future time. But thou, sleep thou now and take thy rest, that thou mayest wake refreshed; whiles thou dost sleep I will even go and feast."

Episode IV: The Soul Debauched to Sin

(*"I will say to my soul—"*)

"Soul! Long hast thou slept; now have I somewhat I will say to thee. Last night the revelers all mocked my weak yielding to thy foolish fantasies. My resolution now is fixed: from henceforth thou must do as I shall will, and serve me well."

"What wilt thou, Man, that I shall do for thee?"

"Thou must go with me where I choose to go; approve of all my plans and purposes; thou must flatter my self-esteem, dress up each fault in pleasant guise; give self-satisfaction in rich measure to my own conceit."

"But, Man, is not the bounden duty of a Soul to bear witness of the truth, and show the Man the very thing he is, if fair or foul?"

"Not if the Soul's master be rich in worldly goods. A poor man's Soul may thus; a rich man's Soul must speak him fair, and feed him honeyed words.

"Moreover, to my revelings and banquets thou must go, nor utter any protest at the fleshly sins thine eyes shall see. Remember, Soul, I am thy master; thou must do my will. Put therefore on thy banquet robes and go to-night with me, and with reveling companions of like mind. The feasts are rich, the wine the best, the hours are passed in joyous banquetry. Obey my word, and question not."

"I must do as thou sayest, Man; I am thy slave."

"Now, Soul, behold the banquet hall, and filled with guests; the tables heaped with viands rare; the wine that floweth fast; the music for the dance. Sit thou here in place prepared for thee, and share the gorgeous revelry now sweeping to its height. . . ."

"OH! BEHOLD! BEHOLD! I see, yea, I do see! Oh, dread and awful sight it is that I do see!"

"Gently, speak gently, Soul! What is it thou dost see?"

"Woe is me, I see draw near the Eternal King; He cometh here for me! His face is dark and dreadful, full of wrath!" (*The Soul faints and falls.*)

Episode V. "This Night Thy Soul Required"

"Man, thou foolish one, what hast thou done? A Soul I gave to thee to be thy good angel and thy guide;

a Soul for thee to nurture, even as a wise and loving mother rears her babe. When that babe is grown to manhood it becomes the mother's strength and guide, wiser and abler than herself. So would thy Soul have helped thee on to purer life, lifted thee in latter days to holiness and heaven.

"But thou, O foolish Man, thou hadst the power of an imperious will; a will which demanded pleasures for thy flesh and sense. Thus didst thou wrong, corrupt and crush thy nobler self, the gentle Soul I gave; behold it there, defiled by thy coarse will to sin.

"Now therefore, since with coarse and stubborn will thou hast debauched to sin the Soul I gave, therefore thy Soul is forfeit; and thou thyself, without a Soul . . . what shall be henceforth thy lot and fate? Behold the Downward Gate that openeth, thyself appointed unto endless travel in the downward way to Death! *And thou hast lost thy Soul.*"

XIV

O EMPTY SEATS, WHY ARE YOU EMPTY?

A Drama of Deserted Pews

NOTATION

These two "Empty Seats" sermons probably attracted the most widespread attention of any sermons in this volume. The secular papers near and far discussed them; the ministers wrote about them, empty seats being a burning question all over; many solutions and suggestions were offered. But it still remains true that "the greatest tragedy of the Church to-day is the tragedy of Deserted Pews."

The preacher of these drama sermons makes no claim to have found a cure-all for this widespread epidemic of empty seats; but every intelligent and thoughtful grappling with such problem is worth while. He does believe, also, that there are some suggestions offered in these sermons that have possibilities of real fruitfulness, especially the "grand plan" offered in the second sermon by Pew No. 61, and wholly original with that pew.

Both these sermons are of course unusual in the requirements which they make upon the preacher, for he must ignore and seemingly forget the actual people of his audience entirely. But if he be one of the many unfortunate preachers who have a large supply of empty seats usually present, he will not find it hard to personify them in his mind and labor with them very earnestly—subconsciously conscious all the time that he is actually appealing to his own Church to awake, arise, put on her strength and shake herself from the dust of this deadening debility, in order to build up Zion.

(HYMNS USED:

"Christ is made the sure Foundation."
"Glorious things of thee are spoken."
"I love thy kingdom, Lord."

SCRIPTURE:

Hebrews 10: 19-39.)

O EMPTY SEATS, WHY ARE YOU EMPTY?

A Drama of Deserted Pews

Episode I: The Preacher's Lament

(*The manse. Monday morning. The Minister speaks:*)

"It is blue Monday, wife, and perhaps that is why I feel so discouraged to-day; but I am going to whisper to you my inmost thought, and say I think I'll resign this church!"

"Why, my dear! What for? You love this people and they love you; we have a pleasant home; you are doing good work. Why think of resigning your pastorate?"

"Because I am heart-sick over the empty pews! Did you observe yesterday how many there were which held not a single worshiper? Actually a majority of pews."

"Y-e-s, I did; and it was a beautiful day, too, with no excuse for any one's staying at home. But perhaps they thought it too nice a day to go to church. I hope attendance will improve in bad weather."

"There is no good, dear, in trying to blink the fact that this has ceased to be a church-going community. This old church of ours that used to be crowded to the doors has now more empty pews than full ones every Sunday."

"But, husband, why can't you preach to the people who are there, and forget the deserted pews?"

"How can I forget them when they keep staring me in the face every minute, reminding me of my scattered flock, and proclaiming ceaselessly the failure of my ministry?"

"Oh, don't call your ministry a failure. It isn't."

"Absolutely—no; comparatively—yes. Think of the vast unevangelized masses of our land who so need the Gospel, yet hear it not. Think of the uncounted millions of the heathen world. And here I am giving the years of my strength preaching sermons to empty pews—sermons that with God's blessing might have brought life to thousands that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.

"Surely I could find even yet a field where the people are hungry to hear the Gospel, and will prefer the house of God rather than the joy-ride, the Sunday golf game, or the indolent hammock. The truth is, I must either resign or find some way to fill up these forsaken seats."

"O husband, don't take this so seriously; please don't!"

"I take it seriously because it is a so unspeakably serious matter. I tell you, my dear, the greatest tragedy of the Church to-day is the Tragedy of Deserted Pews!"

Episode II: The Fantasy in the Temple

(*The following Saturday evening. The preacher has gone into the church in the twilight and is arrang-*

ing his pulpit for the morrow. One dim light merely emphasizes the shadows. Soliloquizing, the preacher looks out over the rows of pews and unconsciously speaks aloud:)

"Well, I suppose half of you pews will be empty again to-morrow. Can you tell me why? Haven't I worked hard and long? Haven't I prayed earnestly? Haven't I loved my people and been loyal to them? O Empty Seats, *why* are you empty Sunday after Sunday?"

"I for one am empty, Minister, because nobody seems to want to sit in me any more" (*spoke a low voice from somewhere in the shadow*).

"Mercy on us! What is that? Who are you, anyhow, back there?"

"Only an empty pew. Weren't you talking to me? I thought you wanted to know why so many of us empty pews are here in church every Sunday. I beg pardon if I intrude: pews aren't expected to talk back at the pulpit, I know."

"Dear me, this *is* a curious experience . . . ! But since you are inclined to talk, tell me just why nobody wants to sit in you any more? That is the thing I am trying to find out."

"Really, I don't know; I hoped you could tell me, Minister. I am one of the little cheap pews. Maybe some of those big rich pews over there could tell, if you would wake them up."

"Wake them up? Are they asleep?"

"Oh, surely, yes. They sleep most of the time, Minister."

"And how could I wake them up, do you think?"

"I don't exactly know, but I think perhaps if you would preach a sermon specially to them some time, they would wake up and listen. I have noticed that people are that way sometimes."

"Well, by my faith, you *are* an observing pew! But if you were a preacher you would know that generally the very ones you mean the sermon for don't take it to themselves at all."

"Maybe, Minister, you don't preach it straight at them so that they can know it is intended for them?"

"It . . is . . just . . possible . . I don't. I hadn't thought of it in that way. But tell me how I could let these empty pews know it, if I decided to preach a sermon specially to them?"

"Would you do it? Will you? I have often wondered, Minister, why you don't, since the empty pews are in the majority. But I thought maybe you imagined that pews couldn't hear unless they had people in them to be 'your hearers' as you call them so often. But we empty pews can hear, really, Minister, if only we know that it is intended for us. But it isn't worth while listening to other people's sermons . . . is it?"

"Well, what I'm asking you is, how am I to let them know that the sermon to-morrow morning is going to be just for them specially?"

"Oh, goody, goody! I'll tell them for you, and then they'll all be awake when you preach."

"Do you mind letting me know when and how you will tell them? They seem sound enough asleep at present."

"Yes, but when the chimes in the church tower peal twelve on Saturday night they always wake up, and I

tell them the news. They call me their Public Press. I don't know what that means: but if they think there is nothing important going on in the church the next day they go off to sleep again. But this will keep them awake sure!"

Episode III: The Sermon to the Empty Pews

(*The audience room; Sunday morning at the hour of service. The preacher enters his pulpit, looks out over his half filled church and says quietly:*)

"I have an announcement to make that will probably surprise my people. For many months, as you have no doubt observed, the empty pews in this church have outnumbered the occupied ones. It seems hardly fair to do all the preaching to the minority. So the sermon this morning will not be preached at all to my people, but to the Empty Pews. Yes, I see by your looks, my people, that you are wondering whether I have gone daft; but I assure you that I never was saner or more serious in my life. I am going to preach this morning a pointed, personal sermon to our deserted pews and give them a piece of my mind."

THE SERMON TO THE EMPTY PEWS

"Now, Empty Pews, I am told that you can hear. I never imagined it, for you have no ears visible. But come to think of it, a good many of my people are in the same state, and yet can hear. One can't always tell from appearances!

"But since you can hear I am going to preach a

sermon specially to you this morning, and my text is found in Samuel 20: 18, 'Thou shalt be missed, because thy seat will be empty.' And my subject is, O Empty Seats, WHY are you Empty?

"Firstly. I want you to take note carefully, O Empty Seats, that the text does not say that *you* would be missed if you were not here. Not at all. It says that the *man* is missed when he stays away and leaves an Empty Seat in his place. Indeed if all you Empty Seats were absent we should not miss you, nor regret your absence a particle.

"Secondly. I will now proceed to tell you plainly just why we should not regret your absence from our church:

"(a) YOU do more to disable the preacher, deaden his enthusiasm, discourage his zeal, and break his heart, than any other thing whatsoever. Hatred, persecution, martyrdom, would be a little thing in comparison!

"(b) YOU do more to chill the church, enervate her efforts, clip the wings of her faith, and rob her of her victory, than all the embattled hosts of hell—unless you yourselves are indeed a part of those hosts, out on secret service! Therefore we disapprove of you, dislike you, dread you, and often denounce you.

"Now, I shall not be one whit surprised if you all get mad and march right out of the church. I have had people do just that, and on far less provocation. But I shall be happy to see you go. If we could just get rid of you forever, my! how our church would prosper.

"Thirdly. Application and Improvement. Now, Empty Pews, I don't really expect you to repent or reform; but just to leave you without excuse, and per-

haps make you ashamed, I remind you of how much nobler you once were; of how low you have sunk from your early estate; of how you have fallen from grace! And I do beseech you to take thought, repent, reform, and become as once you were—a glory and honor in the house of the Lord, instead of a disgrace and dead-weight upon Church and Minister alike!

"We will now be dismissed."

Episode IV: The Hearers Talk Back to the Preacher!

(*To the amazement of preacher and people alike, there comes a babble of answers from the Empty Pews:*)

"Wait a minute, Minister!" . . . "Hear what we have to say, Minister!" . . . "Don't go yet: listen to our side!" . . . "Turn about's fair play!" . . . "We want to talk now, Minister!" . . . "Let us tell you why we're Empty!"

"Of all things! Isn't that amazing? Who ever heard of the pews daring to talk back at the preacher? . . . Still, it does seem fair to give you the chance; so if you will speak one at a time, we will stay and hear you. No. 45, you may talk first."

"Mr. Minister, I wanted to ask if that seat in your text was to blame for being empty? Wasn't it there at the good dinner waiting to be occupied by the man? And, Minister, I am here every Sunday just anxious to have somebody sit in me and hear a good sermon, and . . ."

"Listen to me, Minister; listen to me!"

"No. 76, you oughtn't to interrupt."

"I just wanted to say that the man in your text—was his name David?—that he wasn't to blame either! He was afraid that the king at the head of the table would throw something sharp at him: and I was wondering, when you threw such sharp words at us who didn't really deserve them, whether maybe men stay away from your good sermon dinner because they are afraid of the pointed and cutting things you might slam at them? Do you think that could be it, Minister?"

"H'm, well, I should say, No. 76, that your question itself is rather pointed, if not cutting! I'll have to think that over before I answer."

"Now, Mr. Minister, let me talk! I feel just like that man you read about in the Bible one Sunday, who said his insides were so full of boiling thoughts and words that he would just burst if he didn't get a chance right off, to talk."

"Speak on then, No. 37."

"Minister, I don't believe that even your people who sit in the pews that aren't empty really want other people to sit in us empty seats and fill us up."

"Why, what *do* you mean, No. 37?"

"Well, a few weeks ago a man did come and sit down with me. He wasn't much to look at nor any too clean, I guess. The people all around looked at him out of the corners of their eyes as though he had no business there: and I'm sure he saw it. Another time a stranger lady nicely dressed sat with me; but no one spoke to her, nor welcomed her, nor invited her to come again. I thought perhaps you and the peo-

ple just wanted to keep us Empty Pews as sort of Best Seats, to be looked at and not used. I am glad to find that you do want people to sit in with us . . . but isn't it a funny way to show it, Minister?"

"Please, Mr. Preacher, can't I talk now?"

"Yes, we'll hear from you, No. 13."

"Then since you want to know why we seats are empty I'll say, I think maybe it's because your sermons are empty, too. I've heard so. Do you think that can be the reason? I'm no judge of sermons myself: I usually sleep because I know they are not intended for me. But this one was different, and I'm awake."

"So you are just retailing gossip? All I can say to you is, that if you will come to church regularly . . . ah . . . h'm . . . I mean, if you will listen to the sermons instead of to the gossip, you yourself can decide whether the sermons are as empty as you seem to think. I try my best to make them rich and full: but perhaps you Empty Seats think the sermons empty because you yourselves are wooden."

"I'm No. 84, away back here in the corner. I think I can tell why the seats are empty, if you will let me have my say."

"Go on, No. 84. We want your answer."

"Well, once about fifty years ago I heard old Dr. Goodenough say that the people would always fill the pews in a church where the Pure Gospel was preached: so probably the Seats are empty now because you don't preach the Pure Gospel, as he did."

"Now that accusing explanation I deny absolutely! If you Empty Pews had been awake and listening, instead of sleeping in lazy sloth, you would have been

ready to bear testimony that I have preached the Gospel, the whole Gospel, and nothing but the Gospel, year after year in this church faithfully, fully, earnestly. The Lord, whose I am and whom I serve, be my witness! Why, Empty Seats, enough Gospel has been flung at your wooden backs in the last ten years to have saved multitudes of those who have never heard the way of life. Indeed, I am often tempted to wish that I had gone with that Gospel to Darkest Africa, instead of wasting it on you wooden-hearted Empty Seats who never accept or practice that Gospel.

"But listen: I see No. 36 trying to be heard. What is it, No. 36?"

"Please, Mr. Preacher, perhaps the people don't need the Gospel nowadays; just as they don't need any more the footstoves they used to bring here to church because they have something so much better now. If they don't need the Gospel you can't expect them to come to the Gospel House—can you?"

"Well, No. 36, your question surely makes me sad at heart, because I myself have begun to be afraid that there are many people in this town who have decided that they don't really need the Gospel. But they do need it—and need it all the more just because they think they don't. And as for there being nowadays something better than the Gospel, as our modern steam heating plant is better than the old footstoves—you just don't know what you are saying! Suppose I told you that men had gotten up some invention lately that made the sun in the sky of no use any more? Or that made air unnecessary and out of date? Or that made a mother's love for her children ridiculous and passé?

God made these things and they will never go out of style, never be improved on! And God gave the Gospel as his perfect way of salvation: people will never find anything to take its place, nor ever stop needing it! As long as the world lasts it will remain true that there is none other name under heaven given amongst men whereby we can be saved—must be saved if we are saved at all!"

"Ahem. Ahe-m. Mr. Minister, sir: I am No. 6 up here in the Amen Corner. For fifty years I was Deacon Graham's pew. That dignified and honored deacon has been dead, and his pew has been empty, for twenty years: but in his day his word was law in this Church, because of his unblemished Christian character and his . . . ah-e-m . . . judicial mind. In those days I . . . ahem . . . ah-e-m . . . I was, I may say, the most honored pew in the church: now, alas . . . but that is neither here nor there. . . . However, I will presume to remark, sir, that it impresses me that neither have the Empty Pews of this . . . ahem . . . ancient church been just to you, nor—may I say it, sir?—have you, honored sir, been quite just to them in reflecting upon them for conditions concerning which we Empty Pews are nowise to blame . . . even as these who have spoken have unduly reflected upon you, reverend sir. . . .

"But without longer circumlocution or verbal divagations, may I be permitted to suggest a prudent and possibly fruitful compromise in this matter; namely, that you, revered and honored sir, the Pastor of this ancient and eminent Church, and also we the Empty Seats in the aforesaid Church, enter into some co-

operative agreement by which, counseling and working together, some large and worthy end may be attained in the amelioration and improvement of existing regrettable conditions. . . . Thank you, sir; I have done."

"Well, honored No. 6, I think you've said it! We would better get together and see what can be done, than to be knocking one another. . . . I have it! I'll preach another sermon to you next Sunday morning on the question, O Empty Seats, How Can You Be Filled? Then we will hear what good plans you have thought out during the week. And so planning together and working in unison perhaps a new era will dawn, under God's benediction, for this dear old Church.

"And I am sure I sincerely apologize to you Empty Pews for reflecting upon you, as honored and historic No. 6 has well remarked, for conditions concerning which you have been in nowise to blame. I take back my unkind words entirely. The meeting is now dismissed: the people may withdraw, but I ask all the pews to remain in their places."

XV

O EMPTY SEATS, HOW CAN YOU BE FILLED?

The Preacher and the Seats Confer

NOTATION

Though there be upon these two sermons a thin veneer of humor it covers an aching heart. No doubt there are exceptional cases, conditions, and men; but the lament over seats empty and churches forsaken for the joy ride, the hammock, the golf game, the social visit or the Sunday movies is far too general to be discounted or ignored. And as regards the minister's own feelings, not too strong is the complaint laid against the Empty Seats by "Dr. Newman" that they "do more to disable the preacher, deaden his enthusiasm, discourage his zeal, break his heart, than any other thing whatsoever. Hatred, persecution, martyrdom, would be a little thing in comparison."

Moreover, as a sign of the times, and as a vast problem to be faced by publicists, patriots and preachers alike, if that the cause may be discovered and the cure be described, Empty Seats in Churches is second in importance to none other.

That this new drama sermon method of preaching may prove of a little help in solving this critical problem is a hope that haunts the heart of the pastor who writes this book.

(HYMNS USED:

"Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!"
"The Church's one Foundation."
"Triumphant Zion, lift thy head."

SCRIPTURE:

Luke 14: 12-23.

RESPONSIVE READINGS:

Psalm 84 (Revised), or Psalms 24, 26.)

O EMPTY SEATS, HOW CAN YOU BE FILLED?

The Preacher and the Seats Confer

Episode I: The Deacons in Council

(*Saturday night; home of old Deacon Stone. The full Board is assembled in council. Deacon Stone speaks:*)

"Members of the Official Board, I have invited you to this informal conference to consider the strange eccentricity which our pastor is manifesting. In all my nearly forty years as a deacon I have never seen anything in our church quite so ridiculous as a minister actually preaching a sermon to lifeless, inanimate pews and seeming to hear answering voices from those same senseless seats. I might be tempted to call it rank tomfoolery were there not grave question whether (as was said to an apostle) much study has not made him —well, mentally unsettled. And I understand he proposes to repeat the outlandish performance to-morrow—that is, unless we, the spiritual officers of this church, intervene to prevent the travesty and unbefitting farce.

"What are your views, brethren of the diaconate? Deacon Morehouse, how did the performance impress you?"

"Ahem. . . Well, brethren, Deacon Stone has ex-

pressed my thoughts precisely. Indeed, in previous conversation we found ourselves in full accord. What is best to be done I cannot say, but certainly such irregular and outlandish proceedings should be sternly frowned upon by us."

"Deacon Stone, with your permission I would like to say a word. I am young, and only a short time in the deacon's office; but I confess I have a lot of sympathy with the pastor. Month after month he has had the heart-breaking experience of preaching to everlessening audiences. For a man as intense in feelings as he is, I can readily understand that such an experience has ceased to be endurable: and if his protest has shown itself in a somewhat unprecedented form, who can blame him? Moreover, we have always known that the Doctor is quite an original man; one couldn't expect from him the commonplace. Indeed, his originality has always been regarded as one of his charms."

"A most peculiar charm, I should say, sir, that makes a man conduct himself as daft, in the pulpit! Deacon Morehouse, can you agree with Deacon Strong's views?"

"Not at all, sir; not at all. My own views are that if Pastor Newman isn't able to hold a congregation without descending to such unbecoming sensationalism as preaching to wooden pews, it might be better for him to withdraw and let us put some one in the pulpit who can command a congregation by eloquence and intellectual abilities."

"Mr. Chairman, may I speak?"

"You may, Deacon Carlisle."

"Then, Gentlemen of the Board, I beg leave to protest against the last remarks. I prefer not to enter into this discussion at all, but you know as well as I that Dr. Newman is considered on all sides as an exceedingly able, inspiring and original preacher: a man of brain, piety, and intense zeal. It is no fault of his that pews are empty. I am a traveling man, and all over I find the same condition and the same cry. The automobile, the Sunday paper, Sunday movies, Sunday wireless, plus a lowered Christian conscience as regards the spiritual duty of family and individual churchgoing, are causing a widespread and calamitous increase of empty pews in practically all our churches.

"Therefore if Pastor Newman, with bare heart and strong hands and in his own unique and original way, is grappling with this biggest problem of the modern Church, it seems to me it would be more fitting for us, his cabinet of helpers, to follow his lead and back him up enthusiastically even if he be trying a somewhat unusual tack. If inspired Psalmist and Prophets of old represented mountains and all hills, fruit trees and cedar trees, beasts, cattle and flying fowl, as crying out in praise of God, why is it either outlandish or ridiculous for a preacher of the Gospel to-day to represent empty seats in God's house as being interested that wandering souls should be brought under the influence of God's word of salvation? Let us help, I say, instead of knocking!"

(*After a few silent and thoughtful moments the deacons go slowly to their homes, Deacons Stone and Morehouse together.*)

EPISODE II: "THOU BRINGEST STRANGE THINGS TO OUR EARS!"

(*Sunday morning breakfast tables. Homes: various. Speakers: a miscellaneous assortment.*)

"Well, wife, what do you say to going down to our own church to-day? The fact is, we haven't been there for three or four weeks, and . . ."

"Three or four! Why, my dear, where is your memory? The last time we were at church was on Easter Sunday, and that was just nine weeks ago to-day. I looked it up in my Line-a-Day book this morning."

"Nine weeks! Surely it can't be possible. I thought we went to church generally about every other Sunday. I never intended to go back on the old church like that."

"Well, I can read you the places we went every single Sunday since Easter, if you want to hear!"

(*Hastily.*) "Oh, never mind! I'll take your word for it. But, my dear, I was about to tell you that I hear that Dr. Newman has stopped preaching to the people, because they are so few, and is now addressing his sermons to the empty seats because they are so many. Queer idea, isn't it? And I am told that this morning he is going to preach to the empties and try to get them to tell him how to draw an audience. Quite an original scheme, eh? Suppose we go down and hear him! . . ."

"Come, Charley dear, and go with me to church this morning. One of the queerest things, Charley: Dr. Newman is going to preach a sermon to the empty

pews, instead of to the people. Isn't that a lark? I never heard the like; did you? It ought to be worth hearing for it certainly will be out of the ordinary. Which is what I like in a sermon."

"Well, all right, Mildred, we'll go. It happens that I had to leave the car in the garage over Sunday for some repairs; and it's pretty dull just hanging around the house all day. And, by the way, Mildred, I'm forced to admit that in the two years since we came up to the city from Greenville and brought our church letters to Dr. Newman's church, I have been to service just one Sunday. That's not a very good record, is it? I don't know what my good mother would say if she knew it. No wonder Dr. Newman has quit asking me to come. . . ."

"Well, boys, what's on hand for to-day?"

"I hardly know, father. Joe and I thought perhaps we would go out to the Country Club for a game of golf, but it's beginning to rain; which shuts out canoeing and hiking as well."

"I had an idea of suggesting to you boys that we go to church for a change."

"Go to church, Dad? What's the idea? Aren't you well to-day? Thinking of ordering your coffin?"

"No; but do you know? I've been thinking it over, how I used to take you lads to church regularly, when you were little; and I was fond of it, too. It has been many a long day since we have gone together—or separately, for that matter. Sometimes I regret it. But I just happened to hear last night that Dr. Newman has gotten the queer scheme of preaching sermons to the empty pews instead of to the full ones

—if he has any full ones these days. Our pew is empty regularly enough, I'm sure! But his idea seemed so quaint and original that I imagined that you might care to hear him. What do you say?"

"Oh, no, Dad. You go if you feel like it; but we were fed up on churchgoing when we were kids. I guess it's the movies for us to-day. . . ."

(*And various other similar family confabs over which angels weep.*)

Episode III: The Second Sermon to Empty Pews

(*Hour of morning service. Pastor Newman enters his pulpit, looking strained and sad. At the time for pulpit notices he speaks thus to his people:*)

"Beloved, the somewhat unusual sermon of last Sunday morning was called out suddenly by a remarkable experience on the Saturday evening immediately preceding: I am well aware that the sermon itself has caused much comment, some of it distinctly unfavorable. Yet I believe that sympathy has outweighed criticism; and that solicitude for the future welfare of our church has perhaps outweighed both. Some of my people, however, have remonstrated with me for taking this matter of empty pews so seriously to heart. To such remonstrances I must reply, that when the very life of the church is at issue, pastors who see and think cannot do other than take deeply to heart this tragedy of the deserted pew in our day.

"But however that may be, I ask you to bear patiently with what may seem to some of you an eccentric oddity and, believing that the motive is sincere,

hearken to-day while I preach a second sermon to the empty pews, the topic being: O Empty Seats, How Can You Be Filled?"

THE SERMON

"Now, Empty Pews, I observe that you are still here in large numbers; and I imagine that all this week you have been earnestly pondering the problem as to how you can be filled with worshipers once more, as in olden days. I myself have been musing and praying over this question the whole of every day.

"But, Empty Seats, you probably infer that it is an exceedingly hard matter to fill up church pews; yet it is not. On the contrary, it is perfectly easy to get seats filled to the full—for a while, that is—if we just go at it right. And now I will tell you how.

"First, the preacher can fill all you Empty Seats by stirring up some thrilling excitement. Just let him get up a big fight, and man, being a fighting animal, will run to a fight, if it be only a dog fight. Just listen to this happening that my own father told me about. An editor of a daily paper in a small city wanted a month in the woods, and he hired a bright young fellow to edit his paper during August. But within a week the new editor had gotten into a terrible newspaper row with the competing daily of the town. The fight grew fiercer and fiercer; there were published threats of personal violence; the editor of the other paper actually challenged our young editor to fight a duel. The brave youth responded by announcing that he had armed himself with automatic revolvers and would

shoot the other editor on sight, whether on the street, at the post office, or in the theater.

"Meanwhile the excitement in the community grew more and more tense; both papers were bought by thousands as soon as the newsboys appeared on the streets; and the fever reached white heat. Our editor in the woods, thoroughly alarmed, broke camp and rushed home to prevent bloodshed . . . and found that the editor of the competing paper had himself gone away August 1st on a yachting cruise, and had by chance engaged this same young man to edit his paper. Two papers, one editor, one big fight; circulation of both papers boomed to five times normal; and only a sham battle after all!

"Now, Empty Seats, of course a clergyman cannot work just that same scheme; but he can 'work' human nature just as effectively. More than one minister I know has stirred up excitement and filled his pews to the full by fighting something or somebody eminent. Our New York City neighbor attacked the faith of his own Church, dared his Bishop to bring him to trial for heresy, attained to the heaven of newspaper publicity, and had 'standing room only' at his church—for a time.

"I myself could do that sort of thing. I could attack the holy Bible, deny all the fundamental doctrines of my Church, get myself tried as a heretic; or better, I could start to lambaste Brother Brown and the Methodist Church, Father Flaherty and the Papal Church, Uncle DeHollander and his Lutheran Church, and so get up such a wild excitement that people would be coming from all over to hear me preach!

"Why don't I try some such plan? Listen to me, Empty Seats: I'd rather preach to you, empty as you are, all my earthly days than to attack the Bible I love, deny the deity of my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, whom I adore, cause schism in the Church which is the body of Christ, and draw attention to myself by unchristlike sensationalism, converting my pulpit into a circus or a vaudeville. Besides, nothing of that kind fills seats permanently: when the excitement dies down both church and preacher are deader than before.

"But, O Empty Seats, can you be filled permanently, and by Christlike methods? I believe you can; and the purpose of this conference is to find out how. But before I call on you for your plans I want to lay down some foundation principles which I am sure are true and helpful for our discussion.

"First, filled seats come from coöperative effort. Preacher, people and pews must pull together. Don't you accept that?

"Next, permanent results don't come from sudden spurts. The long pull is what wins in the long run. Isn't it?

"Moreover, the Church must be truly Christian or it can't hold people permanently. Churchgoing must come from conscience; feel-like-it never fills pews. And church-working must originate in heart-love; no pride in having our church outstrip competitors ever builds up God's kingdom. Wouldn't you agree to that statement?

"And my last principle is, that it's hard work that does it! Which is universally and everlastingly true. Yes, Empty Seats! And it is lack of hard work some-

where along the line that explains almost all empty seats in any church. The preacher must work hard in his study to produce noble sermons. He must work hard in his pulpit to preach those sermons nobly. He must work hard as pastor. And the people must work—not just the 'few faithful ones' but all the Christian people—must work hard at this business of getting God's house filled. They must care enough, pray enough, love enough to work, work hard, work long. But what if pastor and people do not? Well, God never made a gracious promise to quitters!

"Now, Empty Seats, I have ended my sermon: what good plans have you thought out this week? Speak up promptly, please."

THE PEWS SPEAK UP

"Mr. Minister, please, sir, I am the pew that talked to you first; the one they call Public Press. They call me that because I tell them all the news. Now if by doing that I alone could wake up all these empty seats so that they heard your sermon last Sunday, it seems to me that you might wake up all the people in town and get them to come and hear your sermons if you told them all about it in the real Public Press. Did you ever try that plan, Mr. Minister—just paying the newspapers as the stores do, to tell the people of the town what you have for them?"

"No, I must confess I never did; or only a few times. It costs so much; and I didn't see much results when I did try it."

"Doesn't it cost a good deal to run a church for

empty pews? They don't put anything into the collection plates, ever! And I wonder if stores generally just put in one or two advertisements and then stop?"

"I'd like to tell you what I've been thinking, Preacher."

"What is it, No. 45?"

"Why, whenever the church door is opened I catch sight of a sort of big board across the street, and I've seen it hundreds of times, I guess. Always it says the same thing: 'Eventually; why not Now?' Isn't that queer? But wouldn't it be a good plan to say something to people's eyes that way, over and over, hundreds and hundreds of times, that would make them think of our church and feel like coming to it?"

"Good for you, No. 45; you have some ideas in your wooden head—I mean, back! That is worth thinking about. I suppose that anything everlastingly before the eyes of the people, whether in the newspapers or on the bill-board, does have its effect in the long run."

"Please, Mr. Preacher, I've been thinking all week, but I don't know whether I can tell it."

"Let us hear it, No. 37."

"Well, you remember that last Sunday I was the one who said I didn't believe your people who sit in the pews really want other people to come; and you said they did, but didn't just understand how to show it to strangers. Now, Preacher, why couldn't we have in our church a Glad-You-Came band, to stay around the doors and say Glad-You-Came to everybody? Wouldn't that make everybody glad he came, and want to come again?"

"Say, No. 37, that is a mighty good suggestion! I

guess we'll get up a Glad-You-Came band right off. Why, the most regular comers as well as the strangers will feel warm about the heart after half a dozen different people give them the glad hand and say happily, 'Glad-You-Came!' "

"Mr. Preacher, Mr. Preacher!"

"Speak up, No. 22. What's your idea?"

"Why, this: If a stranger came once but nobody knew who he was or where he lived, we might never see him again. I've been wondering if we couldn't have a book, or something, back near the door, and some one to get the stranger to write his name and address in that book, and then write to him and thank him for coming and ask him to come again. Wouldn't that be a good plan?"

"A tip-top plan, No. 22; we will adopt that plan right off."

"Ahem, a-h-e-m. Honored sir and Pastor, this is No. 6 here in the Amen Corner speaking. My thought and plan, sir, is based wholly upon long and successful experience, sir. In the old days when I was Deacon Graham's honored pew, and that eminent and godly man was the unquestioned leader in this church, not only was that saintly and now sainted deacon, with his spiritually beautiful wife, present at every stated meeting of the Church, but there were present with that worthy father and mother a family of well-trained, dutiful and reverential children, many in numbers, who in due time grew to honored manhood and womanhood in attendance upon this the church of their fathers. Alas, sir, they are now all gone: but I who harbored them so long am moved to affirm that of all ways of

filling Empty Seats in this or any church the very best is that of Deacon Graham, which in the words of Holy Writ is, 'Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.' I believe, honored and revered pastor, that the training of the children of the church as a faithful and church-going generation—this is the one sure and abiding method of keeping the pews of a church filled with faithful worshipers! I thank you, sir; I have ended my remarks."

"Alas and Alack, No. 6! Which means that nowadays our church's families ordinarily consist of a lass —one—and a lack of any other children. Or maybe the one is a boy. How then can we fill empty seats? But surely, sir, your idea is the right one—and that the Romish Church knows full well."

"Mr. Minister Preacher, I didn't say anything last Sunday, and I haven't spoken to-day. Can't I talk now?"

"Yes, No. 55, speak up: we shall be glad to hear you."

"Now, I've thought it over a long time and it seems just this way to me, that people can get people better than anything else can. 'Pears to me that however much good a big signboard beside the church, or a lot of little signboards in store windows, or paid-for signboards in newspapers might do, yet a live signboard walking around dressed up in clothes and shoes and hat, and talking real talk to people he knows, could do a lot more good in getting people to come. Don't you think so, Mr. Preacher Minister?"

"Yes, No. 55, I certainly do. If fifty people of our

church would just make it their business and their relaxation and their fun, every chance they get, to boost for our church and invite people to come, and tell them what a good time we have here and what a warm welcome we have for them, I am just sure that all you Empty Seats would be filled in a year."

"Well then, Mr. Preacher Minister, why don't you appoint those fifty and tell them to do all that? Don't the people have to do what you tell them?"

"Oh, ahem, . . . now, No. 55, . . . you see . . . well, I don't think I can answer that question just now!"

"But it would really be a good thing for the people and the church, too, if they would invite others that way, wouldn't it?"

"Yes, I am very certain it would!"

"Now, sir, Mr. Preacher, sir, isn't it my turn? I've waited and not said a word . . . and I think I have just the grandest plan of all. May I tell what it is right now?"

"Please do, No. 61. Tell us your grand plan."

"Now then, it's just this. If people can get people, then people can best get the people they know best, can't they? So here is my plan: You change the people all around in the church so that each pew of people will have a whole Empty Pew right in front of it. Then you tell those people that this one Empty Pew is theirs to fill up, their special responsibility; and that so long as that pew stays empty right in front of them, they themselves and other people and the Pastor and the Angels and God will all know that they haven't done their duty! And tell them, too, that they must go

and make special friends of some special people, so as to get them to come and sit in that special pew reserved for them specially. And not only get them there once, but make sure they are there every Sunday: keep specially good friends with them all the time, so as to keep that one Empty Pew filled up always. And Mr. Minister, sir, Mr. Preacher, I thought that all out myself. Don't you think it really is a grand plan?"

"Yes, No. 61! So grand that if every Christian church in America would adopt it really, then the tragedy of the Empty Pews would be converted into the triumphant song of the Victorious Church!

"The meeting is now closed!"

XVI

"THERE IS A LAD HERE"

Outline of a Pageant Sermon

NOTATION

Dramatized sermons may be cast in other molds than the standard one consisting of Episodes and Incidents dramatically interpreted by the preacher in Character. This present discourse on "A Lad Here" is a pageant-sermon, in which the minister preaches "the Word," while assistants present the same "Word" to the eye, thus supplementing and emphasizing the spoken message by visual instruction.

This pageant-sermon can be used more readily and effectively at an evening service. There should be a curtain across the rear half of the platform, to be drawn aside by unseen assistants at the beginning of each of the five main points, upon the preacher's signal. Then let the curtain be quietly drawn again by unseen operators when perhaps a third of the discussion of that point has been given, so that the assistants may swiftly and quietly set the tableau for each succeeding point. There is the alternative but less effective plan of presenting the five tableaux in quick succession, before or after the spoken sermon.

Of course the material printed is but a suggestive outline of the sermon to be preached.

"THERE IS A LAD HERE"—*John* 6:9

Outline of a Pageant Sermon

I. Introduction: The Boy, a Great Subject to Study; Important for Home, Community, Nation, Church of Jesus Christ.

II. Theme: A Lad Here—What Shall We Do With Him?

1. "There is a Lad Here"—in Your Home!

(*Curtain drawn aside, shows one winsome chap of 4 years, a "little Lord Fauntleroy," or just an ordinary home treasure of a sweet-faced merry boy—playing with building blocks or other quiet toys. A few things, quickly brought on and removed, which will give the home and nursery touch, should be about the lad.*)

Yes, there is a lad here, and a dear little fellow he is! No money could buy him from you; he has made his nest in the innermost room of your heart; he is lord of all he surveys in your home. And now that he is here, what are you going to do about him, the little tyrant, prodigy, puzzle that he is? What will you do with him? What do you hope to do for him?

What home training, home influences, home ideals have you for the culture and development of this lad here in your home, committed to your care by the Heavenly Father?

Does not this question give you solemn thought?

Does it not call for earnest self-search as to whether you are worthy in life, character, and spirit, to be the pattern, teacher and guide for this young life?

2. "There is a Lad Here"—in Your Sunday School!

(*Curtain drawn aside, shows a class of 4 or 5 boys of 6 years, dressed in simple but "Sunday" looking clothes; an earnest-faced young teacher; a low table on which are placed a Bible opened, S. S. picture papers and books. The teacher and scholars gathered around the little table, busy with the lesson.*)

Yes, Christian parent, teacher, Church members and officers, there is a lad here in your Sunday School. It is for him and such as him that the Sunday School exists; he is the most important thing in this Sunday School of yours. He is the hope and future of your Church; for him you are steward and trustee. What are you going to do about, with, for this lad? How keep him in your Sunday School? How fill his mind and heart with God's holy truth while here? How make of him a Christian, now while he is under your influence? Are you planning and proceeding intelligently in such way as to make of him a faithful and competent Church man, as he grows up? The Church needs this lad, to become leader, worker, teacher, officer, in the years to come. He needs the Church as much. What a difference it will make to him and to the Church, if while he is in the Sunday School you anchor him to the Church for good! What plans and purposes, ideals and holy ambitions have you, as to this lad who is here in your Sunday School?

3. "There is a Lad Here"—in Your Day School!

(*Curtain aside, shows a class of boys and girls 8 to 10 years of age, standing in a straight line before a seated man teacher. A "little red schoolhouse" scene. Costumes miscellaneous and rural-looking; one boy with red kerchief knotted about his neck. A geography globe and books on table by the teacher, a switch or ferrule in easy reach.*)

Well, right-thinking, public-spirited citizens, Christian men and mothers, here is the lad in your public school: what are you going to do about that fact? What do you purpose to attain for him and assure to him, in the way of right character-building influences, right training for life's work, right views and convictions on life's great problems, while he is here in the public schools of your Community? Shall his interests be protected from the coarse, selfish greed of party politics? Shall he have Bible influences to ennoble and establish him in righteousness; teachers that are positive in their uplifting influence; schools that will make this lad a true American, a true patriot, a true man?

The lad is here: what responsibility do you recognize and will you discharge, for his welfare and his future? His time in your schools is short, the influence abiding, the outcome is of supreme importance to the boy, the Community and the Nation! It is up to you.

4. "There is a Lad Here"—Loafing on the Corners of Your Streets!

(*Curtain aside, shows 2, 3 or more boys of 11 to 13 years, tousle-headed, grimy hands and faces, caps on*

back of heads or over one ear. One boy with imitation cigarette in his mouth, two boys are shooting craps. General air of coarseness. The preacher continues:)

Oh, there is a lad here playing around the alleys, loafing about the street corners, learning bad language, bad habits, coarseness and sin.

What now are you going to do about this lad?—what, for him?—what, with him? He is getting to be a problem for the Community; he is at a crisis time for himself. There is a "spring on the roof of the continent" close beside the Canadian Pacific R. R. track, whose waters can be turned to the polar North or the sunny South by a touch of your hand. A "big brother" could turn this lad to a clean and manly Christian life; a bad companion can turn him to the ways of death. His future trembles in the balance. What about this lad, men, loafing on the corners of your streets?

5. "There is a Lad Here"—Habituated to the Haunts of Sin!

(*If the place where these three lads of 14 to 16 years are seen could be left in semi-darkness, the effect would be heightened. Something to represent a demijohn or a beer keg; each boy holding imitation cigar or cigarette in his mouth; all are seemingly playing cards upon an upturned store box. A half-filled glass, on the box.*)

God pity him, there is a lad here, hanging around the pool rooms, the secret gambling joints, the illicit

drinking places, the outer fringes of the gathering places of the immoral and fallen ones!

Can you do anything about him, for him now? If not, he is gone—lost to civilization, lost to society, lost to the Church, lost to God. If you can do anything it must be done at once. "The time is short." "What thou doest, do quickly."

(*The curtain is again drawn, and the preacher goes on to impress the following lessons:*)

III: Lessons

1. See and realize, now, the supreme importance of the present time, while the Lad is still in your home, your Sunday School and your Church. After he gets away and becomes the street-corner lad, the lad of the evil joint, how the problem increases in difficulty! Keep him and mold him aright, while you still have him.

2. Calculate and comprehend the vast value, or the measureless loss, this Lad may be to Community, to Church, to Christ our Lord, according as he be saved unto righteousness, or permitted to perish in sin! "Am I my brother's keeper?"

XVII

THE GREAT DRAMA OF PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

A Drama Sermon

NOTATION

It certainly required heroic condensation to put Pilgrim's Progress into one sermon! There is an undoubted advantage in presenting the whole marvelous story as a unity. Nevertheless the sermon had to be unduly long: and though the people listened intensely for the almost an hour required, yet it would seem distinctly better to make two Drama Sermons of this beloved and wonderful old religious classic. Indeed, just as P. P. Bliss, the sweet singer of Gospel songs, based years ago an entire book of hymns, The Singing Pilgrim, upon Pilgrim's Progress, even so that deathless Allegory of the Soul would richly furnish forth a whole series of Drama Sermons.

(HYMNS USED:
"'Tis by the faith of joys to come."
"Who trusts in God, a strong abode."
"Ten thousand times ten thousand."

SCRIPTURE LESSON:
Ephesians 6: 10-18.
Revelation 7: 9-17.

RESPONSIVE READING:
Psalm 34.)

With such a subject as Pilgrim's Progress it will be seen at once that the range of selection whether of hymns or of Scripture is exceedingly wide and rich.

THE GREAT DRAMA OF PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

A Drama Sermon

(John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, written in Bedford jail, has been for nigh 250 years the most widely read and the most deeply loved book in the English tongue, except the Bible. The children and the aged alike have pored over its pages; both the cultured and the common people have loved it.

It is an enthralling Allegory, portraying the Christian's checkered life; it is a thrilling Drama, in which spiritual struggles and soul tragedies are acted out as by living characters. It tells in the simple, homely vernacular the story of Christian's escape from the City of Destruction, his pilgrimage through this wicked world, and his happy entrance at last through the gates into the Beautiful City. The most fascinating fiction, the most solemn realities, the most appealing preaching, the most inspiring visions, are combined in this one homely, heart-searching, universal book.

Itself a drama, it is fittingly portrayed in a drama sermon: and to-night we shall go swiftly through the whole book, taking time only for the greatest scenes depicted therein.)

Episode I: Christian's Escape from the City of Destruction

Incident 1. "Flee from the Wrath to Come!"

(*A man is seen, standing outside his own house; looking anxiously across the fields; a great burden upon his back; his face full of despair; a book in his hand:*)

"Oh, what shall I do? What *shall* I do?" (Looking each way as though to run. Then he turns towards his house:) "Dear wife and children, I am undone! This burden on my back is crushing my soul; the city in which we live is going to be destroyed by fire from heaven; we shall all perish, unless some way of escape be found!" (Looks anxiously in all directions.)

"For shame, husband! What crazy idea hath gotten into thy head? Thy whole family, and all thy neighbors, think that thou hast gone daft. Don't be a fool!"

(*Christian turns mournfully away, and runs a little distance; glances into his book; then cries aloud:*)

"Oh, what shall I do to be saved?"

(*A gracious-looking man draws near:*)

"Wherefore dost thou cry?"

"O, sir, this book tells me that I must die and come to judgment; and the burden on my back will sink me lower than the grave! Knowing this I cry out in despair: what shall I do to be saved?"

"My name is Evangelist. I can answer thy question. Read this: FLEE FROM THE WRATH TO COME."

"Whither must I flee?"

"Dost thou see yonder wicket gate?"

"No."

"Well, dost thou see yonder shining light?"

"I . . . think . . . I . . . do."

"Then keep that light in thine eye; go straight to it, and thou shalt see the gate. Knock, and it shall be opened unto thee; and the man there will tell thee what to do."

(*Christian begins to run; his wife, children, neighbors, all cry after him to come back, but he runs the faster, fingers in his ears:*)

"Life! Life! Eternal Life!"

Incident 2. The Slough of Despond, and the Wicket Gate

(*Christian going unwarily, suddenly tumbles headlong into a deep and miry bog.*)

"Oh, oh! What shall I do now? This bog is so deep I cannot touch bottom; the banks are so high and steep I cannot climb out; I am so weighted down with the mire, I shall sink and perish here! . . . But I'll try what I can to get to the bank nearest the wicket gate . . . oh, if only some one would come and help me out!"

"What is this, neighbor? How camest thou in there?"

"Oh, sir, a man called Evangelist directed me this way; and as I was running towards the wicket gate to escape the wrath to come, I fell in here."

"My name is Help. Give me thine hand and I'll help thee out upon solid ground. There, now thou art out of the bog, though indeed thy clothes are a sorry sight! Hasten on thy way straight to the wicket gate."

(*Christian, his heavy load still on his back struggles onward and at length gets up to the gate.*)

"Behold, this is the gate! And over it I see written, Knock, and it shall be opened unto you. I knock and cry, Open, open to a poor burdened sinner, escaped from the city of Destruction and seeking the way to Mount Zion! Open, open, I pray!"

"Yea, I open unto thee. I am God's Good-will. Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it. Enter thou in and find the way to life."

"I pray thee, friend, canst thou not help me off with this heavy burden?"

"Nay, that I cannot do. Not even God's Good-will can do thus. But as to thy burden, be content to bear it until thou comest to the place of deliverance; for there it will fall from thy back of itself. Go forward now on thy journey. At some distance from this gate thou wilt come to the house of the Interpreter; at his door thou must knock, and he will show thee excellent things. Good-by, and God speed thee, friend."

Episode II: Christian's Burden Falls Before the Cross

Incident I. The House of the Interpreter

(*Christian comes to the house of the Interpreter and knocks earnestly. The door-keeper admits him and calls the Interpreter, who hearing Christian's story responds:*)

"Come in and welcome: I will show thee things

which shall be profitable to thee upon thy journey. And first, look upon this portrait that doth hang upon this wall: this is the picture of the true minister of the Gospel. He hath his eyes lifted up to heaven, the best of books in his hand, the law of truth written upon his lips, the world cast behind his back; he stands as if he pleaded with men; and a crown of gold doth hang above his head. This man shall be thy teacher and thy guide in the many difficult places on thy journey.

"Now give me thine hand and let me lead thee through these mystic rooms. Behold this mystery: here is a fire burning against a wall, and a man always casting much water upon it to quench it—yet doth the fire burn higher and hotter. And this is because about here, hidden on the other side of the wall, is one who doth secretly ever feed the fire with oil! Thus doth Satan seek to quench the work of grace in the human heart; but Christ doth ever secretly pour his oil into the heart and nourish the flame." (And thus does the Interpreter lead him from room to room, showing and explaining to him wonderful things upon which we may not tarry: as the Dusty Room, the Stately Palace won by brave battle, the Man in the Iron Cage, and the awful Dream of the Day of Judgment.)

"Christian, hast thou considered all these things?"

"Yes, and they put me in hope and fear."

"Well, let them be as goads to urge thee forward in thy way. And now the Comforter be always with thee, good Christian, to guide thee in the way that leads to the City. Fare thee well."

Incident 2. The Cross and the Shining Ones

(*Christian now finds himself in a highway fenced on either side with a wall, and that wall is called Salvation. All burdened as he is, he runs up the hill, and at its crest . . .*

"Beneath the Cross of Jesus! . . . Crucified for me! . . . My burden hath fallen from my back! . . . gone . . . lost in that open sepulchre! . . . He hath given me rest by his sorrow, and life by his death!

"Upon that cross of Jesus mine eyes—mine eyes can see
The very dying form of One who suffered there for me!
And from my smitten heart with tears two wonders I confess—
The wonders of his glorious love, and my own worthlessness!"

And then come Three Shining Ones: "Peace be to thee!"

"Thy sins be forgiven thee."

"I strip thee of thy rags and clothe thee with the garments of salvation."

"I set this the Lord's mark upon thy forehead; and I give thee this sealed roll, upon which thou must look as thou dost journey, and this thou must give in at the celestial gate when thou comest to the City. Fare thee well."

"At the Cross, at the Cross, where I first saw the light
And the burden of my sin rolled away:
It was there by faith I received my sight,
And now I am happy all the day!"

Incident 3. The Palace Beautiful and the Sunrise Window

(*After this Christian goes on his way, climbs the Hill of Difficulty, falls asleep in the Pleasant Arbor halfway up, loses his precious sealed roll and must return to seek it; and having recovered the roll he hastens on, comes to the stately palace the name of which is Beautiful, before which are two terrible but chained lions; these roar but cannot reach him as he approaches the door.*)

"Ho! sir porter, whose house is this? And may I lodge here to-night?"

"This house was built by the Lord of the hill, and for pilgrims. It is his Church. Discretion, Prudence, Piety and Charity, the grave and beautiful damsels who preside in this house, shall welcome thee herein and dispense to thee its hospitality." (And thus Christian enters into the House Beautiful, enjoys gracious converse, has communion at its holy table, and then goes to rest in a large upper chamber with windows opening to the sunrising: and the name of that chamber is Peace.)

Episode III: Fightings and Fears on a Woeful Way

Incident 1. Foul Fiends in the Dark Valley

(*Having tarried in the Palace Beautiful until the fourth day, enjoying holy hospitality, viewing many wonderful treasures, and receiving armor and weapons*

from the armory, Christian sets forward on his way, which leads him down into the Valley of Humiliation, —where soon he meets a foul fiend of fierce and horrible aspect, whose name is Apollyon.)

"Ho! ho! Here is a runaway servant of mine . . . for I am Prince of all the regions from whence thou camest. I'm minded to slay thee forthwith! Yet get thee back to the city thou hast forsaken, take up my service again, and all shall be well."

"That I cannot do, O thou destroying Apollyon, for I have enlisted under the banner of ANOTHER, greater and holier than thou; and to Him have I plighted my faith."

"Hah! Him and all his do I hate utterly! And since thou hast chosen his service, prepare thyself to die. I swear by my infernal den that here will I spill thy soul. This flaming dart shall slay thee. Let fly! Turn that one aside, didst thou, by thy shield of faith? Then here are scores more for thee. Take that . . . and that . . . and that . . . and that! But what, hast thou a sword? . . . Sharp, indeed! . . . And thou canst wield it, too! . . . But I have thee now! . . . Waw! Wow!! . . . HOOH! HOOF! HAUGH!! . . . Alarrum! . . . Have at thee again! . . . HOOH! HOOFF!! HAUGHAUGH!! . . . YOUGH! YAUGHYOUGH!! . . . Now will I crush the life out of thee with my scale-armored hands and arms . . . !"

"Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy! When I fall I shall arise . . . Take thou that thrust from the sword of the Spirit which is God's Word! . . . Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us! . . . Ah, he caught a

deadly blow from my good sword then! . . . See, he spreads his dragon wings and flees away! Praises be to God who hath given me the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ! Nevertheless I am indeed sore wounded in the fray; yet here is a holy hand that bringeth me leaves from the tree of life for my healing. Yea, they have healed me, and I am well.

"Now, with sword in hand, let me go forward again."

"Back! Back! for thy life, go back! Just at the end of this valley there is another, worse and darker, even the valley of the Shadow of Death!"

"Who are ye two men who thus run so fast, and whence came ye?"

"We are come out of that horrible Valley we tell thee of, and we are running for safety! That valley to which you are going is full of hobgoblins, satyrs, and dragons of the pit, which will tear thee limb from limb; moreover, Hell doth open her mouth in that same place. On the one side of the narrow path is a deep and dreadful ditch; on the other side is an horrible quagmire. Flames and smoke burst out from Hell all along thy way, and there is no escape. Go back, we warn thee!"

"Yet lies the way to the Celestial City through this valley, therefore through it I mean to go though all Hell do bar the road."

"Well, choose thou thy way: we go back to safety."

"Alas, as I go forward this proves indeed a fearful road! I hear horrible voices, I see terrible sights! Behold, yonder cometh to front me a whole band of fiends . . . O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul!

. . . I will walk in the strength of the Lord God! . . . Ah, the fiends give back before that Name. And behold now the day is breaking over this dread valley: He hath turned the shadow of death into the morning!"

Incident 2. Vanity Fair and Faithful

(*Emerging from the Dark Valley Christian overtakes another pilgrim named Faithful bound for the same Celestial City; they unite in friendship, and together they journey on.*)

"Brother Faithful, we are now away from the mouth of Hell; but behold, we are drawing into the midst of a hellish world. Just before us yonder lieth the town of Vanity, and in that town a Fair is kept which is called Vanity Fair. Here we shall find every kind of knave, rogue, cheat and thief; here all iniquity doth flourish; here all godliness is persecuted; and here it may be that one or both of us must seal our testimony with our blood. But since the road to the Celestial City lieth straight through this place, let us go forward bravely, play the man, prove faithful even unto death if need be."

(*And well is their constancy tested; for in that wicked Vanity Fair these followers of Jesus are mocked, assaulted, arrested, tried before an unjust judge and convicted by a perjured jury; they are abused, insulted, assailed; and finally, one of the twain, Faithful, dies in cruel martyrdom at the stake. Yet in God's chariot he is carried straight to the Celestial City.*)

Incident 3. Hopeful, Doubting Castle, and Giant Despair

"Christian, thou true servant of God, as thou hast escaped the fate of Faithful, I would go with thee and myself be the companion of thy pilgrimage to the Celestial City."

"Who art thou, friend? and why wouldst thou go with me?"

"My name is Hopeful; I have been converted by seeing the conduct and constancy of Faithful and thyself in this wicked city; I long to take the place of Faithful and walk with thee henceforth."

"Thou art thrice welcome, brother. Come. Yet do I advise thee, good Hopeful, that it is a long and a weary road that we must walk, ere we can arrive at the Celestial City."

"Yea, I know; still will I strive with God's help to hold out unto the end. My help is in the Name of the Lord."

(*Now, after much journeying, Christian and Hopeful come to a meadow which lieth along beside their road, and seemeth inviting for their sore and tired feet.*)

"See, brother Hopeful, this By-path Meadow; let us climb over the stile and walk in yon easier pathway."

"But how if this path should lead us astray?"

"Nay, that is not likely: see, it lieth close along beside the right road."

"Well, I do fear (*aside*), but Christian is older than I."

"Now see, Hopeful, how much easier the walking is." (*They go on pleasantly a while.*)

"Brother Christian, for some hours now we have walked in this By-path Meadow; it seemeth to me we have wholly lost sight of the right road . . . And behold, dear brother, the Night is swiftly falling! Yea, and it begins to rain, and thunder, and lighten! Let us return at once to the stile and the right road."

"O, Hopeful, who could have thought that this path should have led us out of the way! But, brother, the waters are rising again; now has the night grown pitch-dark; we shall be drowned trying to go back. We must even wait here under this slight shelter until morning's light. . . ."

"Ho, now! Wake up! Who are ye that thus unlawfully trespass upon my grounds? What do ye here?"

"Good sir, we are harmless pilgrims who lost our way in the night; and waiting for the morning we fell asleep."

"Well, knaves, yonder is Doubting Castle of Giant Despair, and I am the lord and owner thereof. March ye before me thither.

"Behold these knavish trespassers, Wife Diffidence: what shall I do with them?"

"Lock them up safely in thy darkest, dirtiest, foulest dungeon; beat them without mercy; and make them so suffer that they will rather choose to die by their own hands than to endure thy chastisements more."

"So will I do, in very truth. . . . There, knaves, ye have had one beating; and ye shall have more and worse, I do promise you!"

(*One week later:*) "Dear Hopeful, we are in a woeful case, and all through my fault, for I led thee out of the right way. Day after day this terrible Giant Despair, urged on by his wife, hath for a whole week now beaten and cudgelled us frightfully. We are not far from death. What shall we do? Is there no escape?"

"Brother Christian, let us betake ourselves to prayer, and pray this whole night through."

"O Hopeful, what a fool I am! Here have I a key in my bosom, a key called Promise, which I am persuaded will open any lock in Doubting Castle; and yet have I lain here forgetting it."

"Good news, good brother! Pluck it out and try."

"Truly it turns back the bolt of this inner door with ease. Now for the outer door that leadeth to the castle yard. . . . That lock also this wondrous key opens. Lastly the iron gate that leadeth to the open fields and the king's highway. . . . Ah, that opens . . . with . . . difficulty . . . but, there it stands open! Now we are out upon the king's highway, and safe; praises to him who hath brought us salvation!"

"Yea, we praise him for his exceeding great and precious Promises."

Episode IV: Foregleams of Glory, Yet a Dark River to Cross

Incident 1. The Delectable Mountains of Emanuel's Land

(*They now go on until they come to the Delectable Mountains, where are gardens and orchards, vineyards*

and fountains, and on the mountain tops they see shepherds feeding their flocks.)

"Whose Delectable Mountains are these? and whose be the sheep that feed upon them?"

"These mountains are Emanuel's Land, O Pilgrims, and are within sight of his city; the sheep also are his, and he laid down his life for them. If ye be pilgrims to the Celestial City we welcome you to these Delectable Mountains. Come into our tents, partake of our food prepared, rest upon our couches; and on the morrow we will show you wonderful things."

"Right glad are we, good shepherds, to share your hospitality."

"Come now, Pilgrims, the morning breaketh, and we would walk with you upon these Delectable Mountains.

"Behold, far down below ye can see Doubting Castle of Giant Despair, where many pilgrims wandering out of the way have ere this perished, or been blinded and left to wander among the tombs.

"Again, behold this hillside door; within there as we open it ye can hear terrible noises amidst the smoke and flame, as of those tormented. This door is a by-way to Hell—a way by which hypocrites go in.

"And now, good pilgrims, take our perspective glass, stand here upon the top of this hill called Clear, and if ye look steadily and carefully in yonder direction ye can even catch a glimpse of the gates of the Celestial City . . . Canst thou see the gates?"

"I . . . I . . . think . . . I see something like . . . the . . . gates . . . yea, and some of . . . the . . . glory . . . of the place: but we are not quite sure, our hands do tremble so."

"Well, fare ye well, good Pilgrims. God grant that ye safely reach the City itself and share in its glory! But see that ye sleep not on the Enchanted Ground by the way."

Incident 2. The Enchanted Ground and the Country of Beulah

"Brother Christian, we have now journeyed far since leaving the Delectable Mountains; I am weary and heavy with sleep; let us lie down here and take one nap."

"By no means, Hopeful, lest sleeping we never wake up more! This must be that Enchanted Ground of which the shepherds did bid us beware: wherefore let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober."

"Alas, how foolish was I! Grateful I am, brother Christian, for thy good counsel. But this air is so drowsy; what shall we do to keep awake while we walk?"

"Let us talk of the great things which God hath done for us."

"With all my heart, dear Christian." (*And thus they go on, sweetly talking.*)

"O brother Hopeful, we have at last gotten over the Enchanted Ground, and now behold what a wondrously beautiful land it is which we are entering!"

"Is not this one of the inhabitants of the land who draweth nigh? Do thou, Christian, ask him concerning it."

"Peace be unto thee, friend. Canst thou tell us who

are pilgrims what land this is that seemeth so fair, and somewhat of its nature and quality?"

"That can I, good Pilgrims: there be indeed peace unto all the dwellers in this sweet country, for it is a land of peace forever undisturbed.

"This land is called the Country of Beulah. In this country birds are continually singing; here the sun shineth both night and day; here fresh flowers spring every morning from the earth anew. Yea, in this land the angels do walk; for the land lieth on the borders of heaven, and from some of these hills ye may obtain views of the Celestial City itself. Indeed the only sickness that ever falleth upon any traveler through this land is a sickness of longing to reach yon heavenly Zion. And that sickness may take you, seeing that ye now draw nigh to the Beautiful City—save that there is a Dark River to be crossed before ye can win unto it."

"Oh, brother Hopeful, let us sing:

"I've reached the land of corn and wine,
And all its treasures freely mine;
Here shines fore'er one undimmed day,
For all my night hath passed away.

"My Saviour comes and walks with me,
And sweet communion now have we;
He gently leads me by the hand,
For this is Heaven's borderland!

"O Beulah Land, sweet Beulah Land,
As on thy highest mount I stand
I look away across the sea
Where mansions are prepared for me,
And view the shining glory shore,
My heaven, my home forevermore!"

Episode V: They Come to the Celestial City at Last

Incident 1. Sinking in the Deep, Dark Waters

(*As Christian and Hopeful address themselves to go up to the City shining in overwhelming glory before them, there meet them two men in radiant raiment, with faces like the light.*)

"Hail, Pilgrims: your journey is all but ended now; your eternal joys are about to begin, and shall never end at all. Nevertheless, before ye can attain unto the Gate ye must pass through the deep, dark waters of the river; for there is no bridge, and no other way to reach the City; and only by your own faith can ye win through the flood. Yet go ye trustingly into the stream, and forget not to look up!"

"Well, brother Christian, let us now go together even into the dark waters."

"Alas, Hopeful, I am sinking! All his waves and billows go over me!"

"Be of good cheer, my brother; I feel the bottom, and it is good."

"Ah, friend, the sorrows of death have compassed me about; I sink down. I shall never see that blessed shore. A horror of great darkness falleth upon my soul, for that I have been so great a sinner."

"Nay, brother Christian; let me hold thy head above the waters. I see the Beautiful Gate, and many standing there to receive us."

"They wait for thee, not for me."

"Dear Christian, be of good cheer; JESUS CHRIST maketh thee whole."

"Oh, I see HIM again! I see HIM; and he tells me, 'When thou passeth through the waters, *I will be with thee;* and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee!' . . . Thank God, I feel the bottom now; and the shore is near. Hallelujah."

Incident 2. Through the Gates of Gold, to the Glory of God

(*Christian and Hopeful emerge together from the River, and find the two Shining Ones awaiting them on the banks.*)

"Welcome, thrice welcome, faithful Pilgrims, to the glory shore. Come now up with us to the Gates of Gold."

"But why do we feel so *lightsome,* and so *strong?*"

"Because ye have left the burden of the flesh behind, in the dark river, and have taken on your Spiritual Body, which groweth never weary nor old."

"Oh, why do we feel so *strangely happy,* dear Shining Ones?"

"That is because all the poisonous remnants of sin have been purged from your souls, and ye are become pure as the angels of God."

"And who are yon glorious bands we see drawing nigh, clad in light, and making marvelous music on many kinds of sweet instruments?"

"They are of the Hosts of God come forth from the Gates of Gold to welcome you in triumph to your heavenly mansions in your Father's House."

"Yet tell us, we pray you, O Shining Ones, what *is* that wondrous *Radiance of Light* which seemeth to blaze upward as a springing fountain from beyond one portion of the golden walls, and then to fall in billows of glory over all the City?"

"The GLORY OF GOD did lighten it, and the LAMB is the Light thereof. At that part is set THE THRONE!

"Behold, O Trumpeters of God, these are two Pilgrims from the earth; they loved our Lord, and left everything for his holy Name. Sound all your golden instruments to welcome them to glory: and let the bells of Heaven ring out a glad all-hail! FOR THE RANSOMED OF THE LORD SHALL RETURN AND COME TO ZION WITH SONGS, AND EVERLASTING JOY UPON THEIR HEADS: THEY SHALL OBTAIN JOY AND GLADNESS, AND SORROW AND SIGHING SHALL FLEE AWAY."

(Thus Christian and Hopeful came attended, up to the Gates; and then the King, having received their sealed rolls, commanded that they be ushered into His Presence: and as they went in I did catch glimpses of the glory that rushed out. But after that, they did shut up the gates; which when I had seen, I wished myself in there amongst them.

So I awoke, and behold, it was a dream!)

THE END

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